

G. 13669

**MEMOIRS OF THE REIGN OF
ROBESPIERRE**

*The Sundial Illustrated Historical
Memoirs*

THE MEMOIRS OF MADAME VIGÉE LE BRUN

THE MEMOIRS OF THE COUNT DE SÉGUR

THE MEMOIRS OF THE DUCHESS OF ABRANTES

MEMOIRS OF THE REIGN OF ROBESPIERRE



HAWKER SELLING THE PORTRAIT OF LOUIS XVI: "LONG LIVE THE KING!" BY DEBUCOURT.
Engraving by Augustin le Grand, 1789. (Musée Carnavalet.)

MEMOIRS OF THE REIGN OF ROBESPIERRE

BY
HELEN MARIA WILLIAMS



LONDON
JOHN HAMILTON LIMITED
Publishers

*Printed in Great Britain by
John Wright & Sons Ltd., Bristol*

CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION, BY F. FUNCK-BRENTANO - - -	11
I.—THE LUXEMBOURG PRISON - - -	23
II.—THE JACOBIN CONQUEST - - -	51
III.—STREAMS OF BLOOD - - -	61
IV.—AT THE CONVENT DES ANGLAISES, RUE DE CHARENTON -	81
V.—THE CRIMES OF ROBESPIERRE - - -	104
VI.—OUR RETREAT AT MARLY - - -	117
VII.—THE TYRANT - - -	124
VIII.—THERMIDOR - - -	152
IX.—“ LA VENGEANCE NATIONALE ” - - -	193
X.—THE REVOLUTION OF PRAIRIAL - - -	199
XI.—THE CONSTITUTION OF THE YEAR III - - -	206

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Hawker selling the Portrait of Louis XVI	-	<i>Frontispiece</i>
		FACING PAGE
Helen Maria Williams	- - - -	12
Skirmishes in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine	- - - -	16
Camille Desmoulins at the Palais-Royal	- - - -	18
The Oath in the Tennis Court	- - - -	20
Mirabeau	- - - -	28
Reproduction of a Drawing representing the Taking of the Bastille	- - - -	30
Barère	- - - -	32
Napoleon, First Consul	- - - -	34
Lazare Carnot	- - - -	38
Nelson	- - - -	42
William Pitt	- - - -	46
Subscription Leaflet for a New Edition of the Poems of H. M. Williams	- - - -	48
Helen Maria Williams. Portrait taken February 1st, 1816	- - - -	50
Robespierre, by Houdon	- - - -	52
The Square of the Hôtel-de-Ville	- - - -	54
The Heads of the Marquis de Launey and of de Losme-Salbray	- - - -	56
Order for the Imprisonment of H. M. Williams	- - - -	58
The Madelonnettes Prison	- - - -	60
The Luxembourg	- - - -	62
Interior of the Luxembourg	- - - -	64
Saucer à la Guillotine	- - - -	66
The Countess de Genlis	- - - -	68
Stamp of the Revolutionary Epoch	- - - -	70
Assassination of Lepellétrier de Saint-Fargeau	- - - -	74
Execution of Louis XVI	- - - -	76
June 2nd, 1793. The Tuileries Palace	- - - -	78
Portrait of Robespierre	- - - -	80
Pétion de Villeneuve, Mayor of Paris	- - - -	82
Assassination of Marat by Charlotte Corday	- - - -	84
Marat Assassinated	- - - -	86

List of Illustrations

	FACING PAGE
Charlotte Corday, by J. J. Hauer - - - - -	88
Tomb of J. P. Marat - - - - -	90
Marie Antoinette in the Prison du Temple - - - - -	92
Execution of Marie Antoinette - - - - -	94
The Place de la Concorde with the Statue of Liberty - - - - -	96
Order to Release H. M. Williams and her Sister Cecilia - - - - -	98
Barère, by Louis David - - - - -	102
Order to Release Helen Williams (Mother of Helen Maria) - - - - -	106
Madame Roland - - - - -	110
Condorcet Commits Suicide in Prison - - - - -	112
Fabre d'Eglantine - - - - -	114
Rabaut Saint-Etienne - - - - -	118
Loiserolles accepts Death instead of His Son - - - - -	122
Marly-le-Roi - - - - -	126
The Hébertists Led to the Scaffold - - - - -	128
Arrest of Henry Admiral, 4, rue Favart - - - - -	130
Cécile Renaud Arrested at Robespierre's House - - - - -	136
Louis David - - - - -	142
Attack on the Hôtel-de-Ville - - - - -	144
9 Thermidor (July 27th, 1794) - - - - -	146
9 Thermidor (July 27th, 1794) - - - - -	150
The Closing of the Jacobin Hall - - - - -	154
Portrait of Robespierre - - - - -	158
Musée Dupuytren - - - - -	160
The Abbé Grégoire. Talma in the Rôle of Sulla - - - - -	164
Boissy d'Anglas with the Head of the Deputy Féraud at the Convention - - - - -	172
Collot d'Herbois and Joseph Lebon - - - - -	176
Lazare Hoche - - - - -	180
General Hoche's Camp. The Women of France imitating the Women of Rome - - - - -	188
Rouget de Lisle in 1829. Pichegru - - - - -	192
Robespierre's Room in Duplay's House - - - - -	196
Robespierre on the Morning of 10 Thermidor - - - - -	204

EDITOR'S NOTE

THE work published here appeared originally in 1795, in three volumes, under the title of "Letters containing a sketch of the politics of France, from the 31st of May, 1793, till the 10th of Thermidor, 28th of July, 1794, and of the scenes which have passed in the prisons of Paris, by Helen Maria Williams. London: G. and J. Robinson." A fourth volume was added to the second edition of 1796.

They appeared in the form of letters addressed by Miss Williams to a friend in England, from Switzerland, where she had escaped after her release from prison.

The present publication is about one-half the length of the original work, the parts omitted consisting mainly in military and political details which have now become matters of general history.

INTRODUCTION

By F. FUNCK-BRENTANO

THE taste of the public is turning more and more towards historical studies, and these are understood to the extent that they are engaged solely in the discovery of the truth. And, among historical works, preference is shown for memoirs. Writings left by those who are no more revive far-off times, and the reader becomes himself an historian.

It has not been possible, however, to exclude political matters entirely from the memoirs here published. In this case, impartiality does not consist in giving merely a colourless account of events, without any personal opinions, but in publishing everything that appears interesting and useful to know, without hesitating to add the opinions of the author, whatever they may be.

Only authentic memoirs are published. This word requires a brief commentary. Those memoirs should be considered authentic which have been written by the author to whom they are attributed and which deal with events in which the author has been concerned or has witnessed, although, these conditions being granted, it does not follow that everything contained in the memoirs is necessarily exact. Our

ambition should be limited to giving the public the authentic text, in the sense defined above, verifying the most important dates and identifying those persons referred to in the text who are not to be found in the ordinary histories.

* * * *

The name of Helen Maria Williams is little known, although she wrote largely on the history of the French Revolution. She took part directly in the events she described, and could with truth have said: "My remarks have at least the value of being those of an eye-witness. I saw what happened and I write of what I saw."

While still young she acquired a reputation in England as a writer, particularly as a poet. Her friends included Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, André Chénier, de Maistre and Alexander Humboldt. The most celebrated men of her day, Barère and Carnot, Fox and Kosciusko, had sat at her table. She was an acquaintance of Rouget de Lisle and was to be seen riding in the Bois de Boulogne with Bonaparte, when Consul.

The work given here was published in London in 1795, that is, immediately after the events described, and is little known and extremely rare.*

* Unfortunately, it has been impossible to discover a copy of Volume IV, and Chapters IX-XI have been translated from an abridged French edition published in Paris in 1909.



HELEN MARIA WILLIAMS.

Engraving by H. Lips.

(Bibliothèque Nationale.)

Introduction

Helen Maria Williams was born in London, probably in 1762, although she herself, when becoming a French subject, gave the date as 1769. Her father was an officer in the English Army, her mother a Scotswoman. The father died when Helen Maria was quite young, leaving three daughters—herself and her two sisters, Cecilia and Persis. For a time the family lived in Berwick-on-Tweed, Mrs. Williams being Helen's sole instructor. In 1781 Helen came to London with her poem, *Edwin and Elfrida*, which aroused the enthusiasm of a Doctor Kippis, who wrote an introduction to it and found a publisher. In the years that followed Helen Maria Williams published many books of verse which were extremely well received.

Her feelings were enthusiastic and generous. She had a passion—her enemies called it a madness—for liberty, whether on behalf of the enslaved negroes or the oppressed Greeks. In 1786 she wrote a poem, and in 1790 a novel, *Julia*, on the subject of slavery.

While living in Essex, the French Revolution, which was to change the whole of her life, broke out. The Baron du Fossé, whose wife, while living in England, had taught Helen the French language, invited her and Cecilia to France to witness "the dawn of liberty." The two young Englishwomen arrived at Paris on July 13th, 1790, and took part on the following day in the "festival of the federation."

"Had the boat arrived a few hours later," she

writes, "I should have missed the most beautiful spectacle ever presented in the vast theatre of the world." "The impressions of that memorable day have determined my political opinions. It seemed to me then that France had no other care but to enjoy her happiness."

While living in Paris she attended the meetings of the Constituent Assembly, and became a warm admirer of Mirabeau, mainly because he "was a friend of the unfortunate Africans." So great was the enthusiasm for the new reforms that, if we are to believe Miss Williams, in the salons the women no longer sought to please the men, nor the men to love the women. Writing in 1790 to a friend in England, she says: "And I, too, although a foreigner in this land of happiness, add my voice to this universal concert and cry with all my heart, '*Vive, vive la Nation!*'"

In September, 1790, Miss Williams returned to England, and published an account of her stay in France. It was one of the first works published in England on the Revolution, and sold very widely.

In 1791 Helen Williams persuaded her mother and two sisters to return with her to France, where they arrived shortly before the events of August 10th, 1792. "The secret reason was my hope to take part more closely in the triumphs of liberty."

At Paris, Helen Maria, with her mother and two sisters, lived in the rue de Lille. François-Xavier

Introduction

Lauthenas, who was shortly afterwards elected to the Convention, introduced her to Madame Roland and to those who later became the most famous of the Girondins.

On August 10th she witnessed from the upper windows of her house the attack on the Tuileries. "Very late in the evening," she writes, "I tried to forget the heartrending events of the day, and walked for a while on the terrace of our garden, which faces the river." The massacres of September filled her with horror.

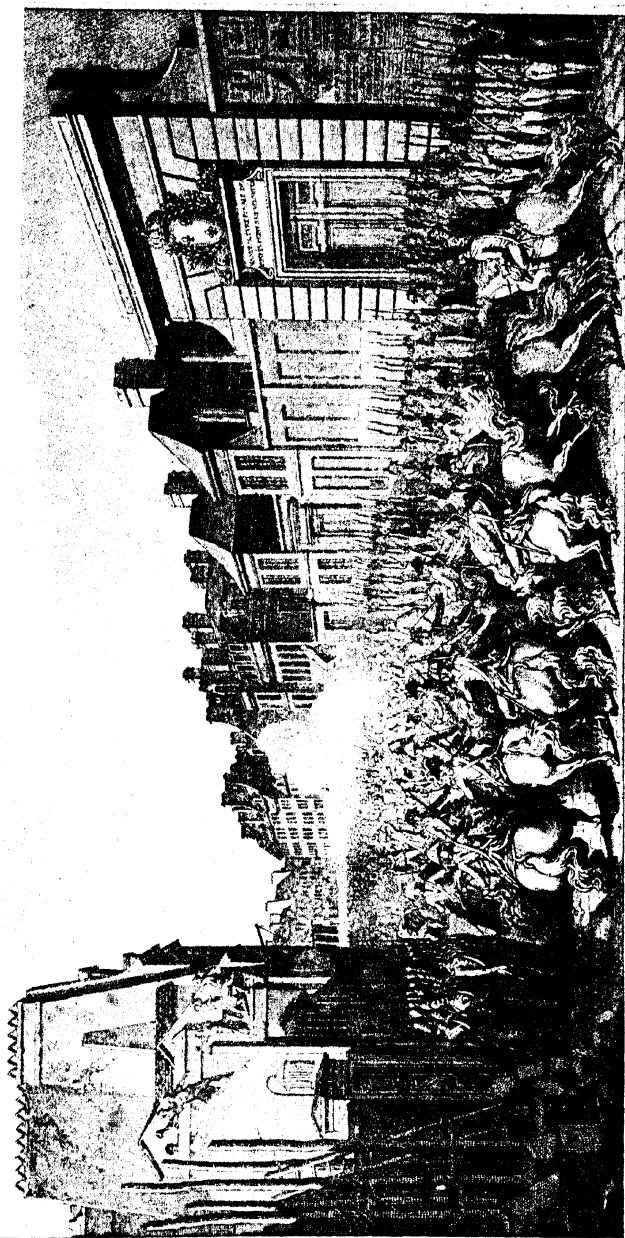
From the rue de Lille the four Englishwomen moved to the rue Helvétius (now rue Sainte-Anne). There, on Sunday evenings, literary and political reunions took place "around a cup of tea" in the English fashion. The principal Girondins, Brissot, Vergniaud, Fonfrède, Ducos, Baucal des Issarts, the two Rabauts and Madame Roland, were frequent visitors, as well as men of letters such as Bernardin de Saint-Pierre and Champfort.

The young Englishwoman, an enthusiastic republican full of spirit and ardour, charmed her visitors, and Baucal des Issarts fell deeply in love with her. He was thirty-nine years of age, and Miss Williams thirty-one. While not returning his affection, she used her influence to persuade him to vote against the death of the king. In March, 1793, des Issarts departed on a mission to Austria, and on his return

renewed his request. At that time (June, 1796) Helen Maria Williams was living with her mother in the rue de Verneuil, and her heart was elsewhere.

A firm republican and a zealous supporter of the principles of the Revolution, Miss Williams was extremely hostile to the excesses of the Jacobins. On the evening of May 31st, 1793, which witnesses the fall of the Gironde in the Convention, she was called by a servant into the adjoining room. "There I found Rabaut Saint-Etienne in a state of great agitation. While the Convention was drawing up the decree of accusation against the commission of twelve (commission of which Rabaut had been secretary) he had made his escape. I saw him, pale, worn-out, overcome with fatigue . . . he asked me to give him shelter until midnight. At that hour he bade me adieu."

The Girondins were placed under arrest, but at first were allowed to remain at home under guard, and there Miss Williams often visited her friends. On October 11th, 1793, she was herself arrested, with her mother and two sisters. A few months previously, on August 11th, Toulon and eleven ships of the line had been surrendered to the English. The arrest of all British subjects living in France was an act of reprisal on the part of the Convention.



ATTROUPEMENT AU FAUXBOURG ANTOINE,
1830.

Introduction

Of her life while under arrest the reader will learn in the following pages. She owed her liberty to the urgent applications of Athanase-Marie-Martin Coquerel, a nephew of the Baroness du Fossé. Athanase was engaged to be married to Helen's sister Cecilia. His efforts were supported by those of the poet Dorat-Cubières and the celebrated Jean de Bry.

Once free, Helen spent some time in Switzerland, living principally in Basle. She was somewhat disappointed in the Swiss character, which, with her romantic imagination, she had believed to be full of a noble love for liberty. "I discovered among the Swiss a love neither for the arts, nor for literature, nor for liberty, nor for any other earthly good—except money. I never heard talk of anything except financial matters, and had I not seen the Rhine rolling turbulently under my window, I could have believed myself again in the neighbourhood of the Palais Royal." Her *Voyage in Switzerland*, published in London in 1798, was translated into French by the famous economist, J. B. Say.

Helen returned to Paris after the fall of Robespierre, and was present at the trial of Fouquier-Tinville, which lasted from March 28th to May 6th, 1795.

She became a close friend of John Hurford Stone, who was living in France as a political refugee, having been accused in England of treason and of taking part in a conspiracy to take the life of King George and

provoke a rebellion. Stone and Miss Williams were made to understand each other; both were of a generous disposition, enthusiastic in the cause of the Revolution, enamoured of liberty. They bound their lives to each other. It has been said that they were united by a secret marriage after Stone was divorced from Rachel Coope in 1794.

Charles Coquerel, Miss Williams' nephew, describes Stone as a man of abrupt character and original manners, always ready to be of service to others. He was born in 1763 at Taunton, and had begun life as a coal merchant. Later he took up politics and became a friend of Price and Priestley. In London, from 1789 to 1790 he was one of the most active members of the Society of Friends of the French Revolution. Stone went to France in 1790 and was arrested on October 10th, 1793, and imprisoned in the Luxembourg at the same time as Miss Williams. Set free after seventeen days, he was again arrested in 1794 because of his connections with the Girondins.

Stone was an interesting man. He lived in Paris as a representative of O'Reilly's pottery works at Creil. Later he founded a printing press and worked for the State, publishing a French edition of the Bible. He ruined himself by issuing a Latin edition *de luxe* of Humboldt's *Cosmos*. After this, Helen redoubled her literary activities in order to provide for her friend.



CAMILLE DESMOULINS AT THE PALAIS-ROYAL.

(Musée Carnardet.)

temporary Water-colour.

Introduction

On the eve of the *coup d'état* of Brumaire, Miss Williams visited the Orangerie at Saint-Cloud, prepared for the reception of the Assembly. Since Fructidor she had detested Bonaparte, but the tyranny shown to an ever-increasing extent by the directory government turned her sympathies to the liberator, and like so many others, she saw in the consulate the emancipation of the country. "When Bonaparte was declared First Consul, I thought that liberty would again flourish under his auspices, and that France would become great and happy." Shortly after, a circumstance occurred which deepened this feeling. Miss Williams was riding one morning in the Bois de Boulogne with her friend, Thiessé, member of the tribunal, when they met the young consul. "Bonaparte immediately joined us, and rode through the Bois at our side. He was extremely polite, and told me that he had just read my description of the Naples revolution. For a long time I remembered the actual words that he used and the tone he employed in speaking." It was in this history of the revolution and counter-revolution at Naples that Helen had criticized the conduct of Nelson. There is a copy in the British Museum containing the marginal notes of the great sailor himself.

From that day Helen's antipathy to Bonaparte changed into enthusiasm, although later the antipathy was restored. Republican as she was, she could not

forgive Napoleon his conquest of personal power ; so much so that, having published an ode after the Peace of Amiens in praise of England, she was for the second time arrested in the middle of the night, and spent a day in the police station.

Helen continued with her literary work, including moral and philosophic studies on the social and economic condition of France, and translations from the French. In 1808 her poems were rendered into French by two academicians, S. de Boufflers and Esménard.

One particular work of Helen Maria Williams called forth most violent attacks. This was her publication in 1803, in both English and French, of what was claimed to be the " Political and Confidential Correspondence of Louis XVI," an apocryphal work by Babié de Barcenay and S. I. de la Platière. The English edition was supplemented by notes in which Helen had failed to hide her republican sentiments. Her critics attacked her character, her opinions, and her private life, although her good faith in publishing this work was never questioned.

Miss Williams was living in Paris during the siege by the Allies. She welcomed the fall of the Empire with joy. In 1817 she and Stone became naturalized French subjects. Helen reopened her salon, and the famous Sunday evening teas started afresh, but her literary activities scarcely provided sufficient means



From the Original Drawing of Louis David
THE OATH IN THE TENNIS COURT, JUNE 20TH, 1789.

Introduction

for herself and Stone, who was utterly ruined financially.

Stone died in 1818. He was buried at Père Lachaise, and Helen erected a memorial to him as “the last token of a long friendship.”

Her nephew, Athanase-Laurent Coquerel, invited her to live with him at Amsterdam, but the loss of the literary life of Paris, and the dull and lifeless customs of the Dutch people, overwhelmed her with such sadness that Coquerel took her back to Paris, and provided her with a pension until her death on December 14th, 1827.

The ashes of Helen Maria Williams rest at Père Lachaise, next to those of her friend Stone.

MEMOIRS OF THE REIGN OF ROBESPIERRE

I

THE LUXEMBOURG PRISON

AFTER so long a suspension of our correspondence, after a silence like that of death, and a separation which for some time past seemed as final as if we had been divided by the limits of “that country from whose bourn no traveller returns,” your letter was a talisman that served to conjure up a thousand images of sorrows and of joys that are past, and which were obliterated by the turbulent sensations of dismay and horror.

Perhaps it will not be uninteresting to you to receive from me a sketch of the scenes which have passed in Paris since the 2nd of June, an epoch to be for ever deplored by the friends of liberty, which seated a vulgar and sanguinary despot on the ruins of a throne, till the memorable 28th of July, 1794, when liberty, bleeding with a thousand wounds, revived once more. If the picture I send you of those extraordinary events be not well drawn, it is at least marked with the

characters of truth, since I have been the witness of the scenes I describe, and have known personally all the principal actors.

Not long after the reign of Robespierre began, all passports to leave the country were refused, and the arrestation of the English residing in France was decreed by the National Convention ; but the very next day the decree was repealed on the representation of some French merchants, who shewed its impolicy. We therefore concluded that we had no such measures to fear in future ; and we heard from what we believed to be good authority, that if any decree passed with respect to the English, it would be that of their being ordered to leave the republic.

One evening when Bernardin St. Pierre, the author of the charming little novel of *Paul and Virginia*, was drinking tea with me, and while I was listening to a description he gave me of a small house which he had lately built in the centre of a beautiful island of the river that flows by Essoune, which he was employed in decorating, and where he meant to realize some of the lovely scenes which his imagination has pictured in the Mauritius, I was suddenly called away from this fairyland by the appearance of a friend, who rushed into the room, and with great agitation told us that a decree had just passed in the National Convention, ordering all the English in France to be put into arrestation in the space of four-and-twenty

The Luxembourg Prison

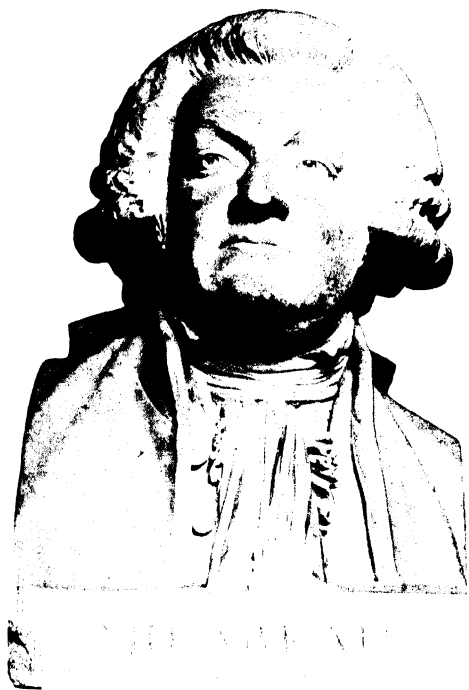
hours, and their property to be confiscated. We passed the night without sleep, and the following day in anxiety and perturbation not to be described, expecting every moment the commissaries of the revolutionary committee and their guards, to put in force the mandates of the Convention. As the day advanced our terror increased ; in the evening we received information that most of our English acquaintances were conducted to prison. At length night came ; and no commissaries appearing, we began to flatter ourselves that, being a family of women, it was intended that we should be spared ; for the time was only now arrived when neither sex nor age gave any claim to compassion. Overcome with fatigue and emotion, we went to bed with some faint hopes of exemption from the general calamity of our countrymen. These hopes were, however, of but short duration. At two in the morning we were awakened by a loud knocking at the gate of the hotel, which we well knew to be the fatal signal of our approaching captivity ; and a few minutes after the bell of our apartments was rung with violence. My sister and myself hurried on our clothes and went with trembling steps to the ante-chamber, where we found two commissaries of the revolutionary committee of our section, accompanied by a guard, two of whom were placed at the outer door with their swords drawn, while the rest entered the room. One of these

constituted authorities held a paper in his hand, which was a copy of the decree of the Convention and which he offered to read to us ; but we declined hearing it, and told him we were ready to obey the law. Seeing us pale and trembling, he and his colleagues endeavoured to comfort us ; they begged us to compose ourselves ; they repeated that our arrestation was only part of a general political measure, and that innocence had nothing to fear. Alas ! innocence was no longer any plea for safety. They took a *procès-verbal* of our names, ages, the country where we were born, the length of time we had lived in France ; and when this register was finished, we were told that we must prepare to depart. We were each of us allowed to take as much clean linen as we could tie up in a handkerchief, and which was all the property we could now call our own ; the rest, in consequence of the decree, being seized by the nation. Some of the guards were disposed to treat us with rudeness, which the commissaries sternly repressed, and ordering them to keep at some distance, made us lean on their arms, for they saw we stood in need of support, in our way to the committee-room. We found this place crowded with commissaries and soldiers, some sleeping, some writing, and others amusing themselves with pleasantries of a revolutionary nature, to which we listened trembling. Every half-hour a guard entered, conducting English prisoners, among whom were no women but ourselves.

The Luxembourg Prison

Here we passed the long night ; and at eight in the morning our countrymen were taken to the prison of the Madelonnettes, while we were still detained at the committee ; we discovered afterwards that this was owing to the humanity of the commissaries who arrested us, and who sent to the municipality to know if we might not be taken to the Luxembourg, where we should find good accommodations, while at the Madelonnettes scarcely a bed could be procured. All that compassion could dictate, all the leniency which it was in the power of these commissaries to display without incurring ten years' imprisonment, the penalty annexed to leaving us at liberty, we experienced. Humanity from members of a revolutionary committee ! You will perhaps exclaim in the language of the Jews, " Can any good thing come out of Nazareth ? " It is certain, however, strange as it may seem, that our two commissaries behaved towards us as if they remembered that we were defenceless women in a land of strangers ; that we were accused of no crime except that of being born on the soil of England ; and that, if we were punished, we had only deserved it by trusting with too easy a belief in that national faith which was now violated. By the way, when I tell you that we experienced compassion from revolutionary committees, you will not suppose I mean to assert that compassionate men formed the majority of their committees. The greater part of mankind in all

ages, even when accustomed to the most elevated rank, have abused power ; how then could it be hoped that unlimited power would not be abused, which was confided to men who were for the most part ignorant and unenlightened ; men who, till that period confined to their shops and their manual occupations, were suddenly transported into splendid hotels, with authority to unlock cabinets blazing with jewels, to seize upon heaps of uncounted gold, and with a stroke of their pens to dispense as many warrants for imprisonment as caprice, envy or mistaken zeal might prompt ; who were made arbiters of the liberty, property and even lives of their fellow-citizens ; and who were incited, nay, even compelled, to acts of violence under the penalty of being branded with the guilt of *moderantism* ? When such was the new-established system, when it required the most daring courage to be humane, and when to be cruel was to be safe, can you wonder that among the revolutionary committees in general there was not “ as much pity to be found as would fill the eye of a wren ” ? After passing the whole day (October 12th, 1793), as we had done the night, in the committee-room, orders arrived from the municipality to send us to the former palace, now the prison of the Luxembourg, where we were attended by two guards within each coach, while two walked on each side. What strange sensations I felt as I passed through the streets of Paris, and ascended



MIRABEAU.

By Houdon.

(Musée de Versailles.)

The Luxembourg Prison

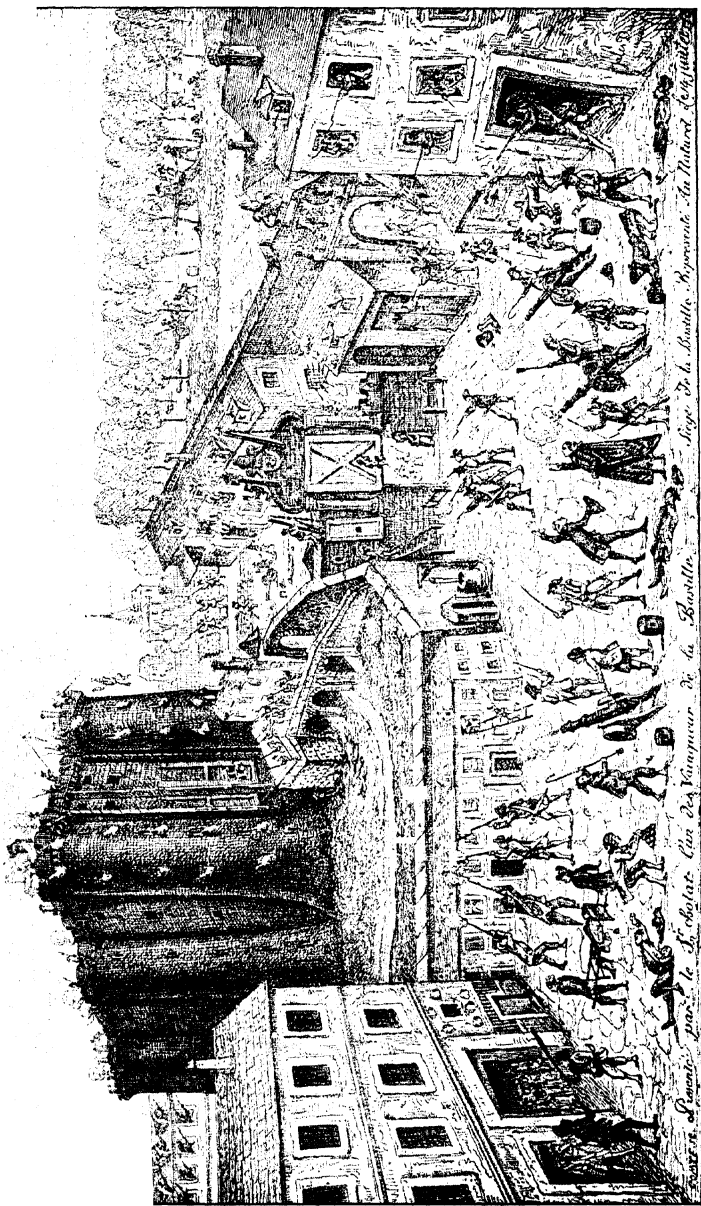
the steps of the Luxembourg, a sad spectacle to the crowd ! We were conducted to the range of apartments above the former rooms of state, where we were received with the utmost civility by the keeper of the prison, Benoit, a name which many a wretch has blessed, for many a sorrow his compassion and gentleness have softened. His heart was indeed but ill suited to his office ; and often he incurred the displeasure of those savages by whom he was employed, and who wished their victims to feel the full extent of their calamity, unmitigated by any detail of kindness, any attention to those little wants which this benevolent person was anxious to remove, or those few comforts which he had the power to bestow. The barbarians thought it not enough to load their victims with iron unless “ it entered into their souls.” But Benoit was not to be intimidated into cruelty. Without deviating from his duty, he pursued his steady course of humanity ; and may the grateful benedictions of the unhappy have ascended for him to heaven !

We had a good apartment allotted us, which a few weeks before (July 26th–30th, 1793) had been inhabited by Valazé, one of the deputies of the Convention, who was now transferred to the prison of the Conciergerie. Our apartment, with several adjoining, had soon after the event of the 31st of May been prepared for the imprisonment of the deputies of the *côté droit* ; and for that purpose the windows which commanded

a fine view of the Luxembourg gardens had been blocked up to the upper panes, which were barred with iron. Mattresses were provided for us in this gloomy chamber, the door of which was locked by one of our jailers ; and we had suffered too much fatigue of body, as well as disturbance of mind, not to find a refuge from sorrow in some hours of profound sleep.

The next morning the sun arose with unusual brightness ; and with the aid of a table on which I mounted, I saw through our grated windows the beautiful gardens of the Luxembourg. Its tall, majestic trees had not yet lost their foliage ; and though they were fallen, like our fortunes, “ into the sear, the yellow leaf,” they still presented those rich gradations of colouring which belong to autumn. The sun gilded the Gothic spires of the surrounding convents, which lifted up their tall points above the venerable groves ; while on the background of the scenery arose the hills of Meudon. It seemed to me as if the declining season had shed its last interesting graces over the landscape to soothe my afflicted spirit ; and such was the effect it produced. It is scarcely possible to contemplate the beauties of nature without that enthusiastic pleasure which swells into devotion ; and when such dispositions are excited in the mind, resignation to sufferings which in the sacred words of Scripture “ are but for a moment ” becomes a less difficult duty.

The Luxembourg had lately been fitted up to receive



REPRODUCTION OF A DRAWING REPRESENTING THE TAKING OF THE BASTILLE, JULY 14th 1789

By Claude Chabot. Fine Mezzotint. One of the 11 Engravings.

The Luxembourg Prison

the crowd of new inhabitants with which it was going to be peopled, and every apartment obtained a particular appellation, which was inscribed on the outside of the door. We were lodged in the chamber of *Cincinnatus* ; *Brutus*, I think, was our next-door neighbour ; and *Socrates* had pitched his tent at the distance of a few paces. The chamber of *Indivisibility* was allotted to some persons accused of *federalism*, and *Liberty* was written in broad characters over the door of a prisoner who was *au secret*.* With respect to great names, it has been observed in Paris that almost all the illustrious characters of Greece and Rome have been led to the guillotine—for instance, *Brutus*, who often, while we were in prison, came from the municipality with orders from *Anaxagoras*, was soon after doomed to an equal fate,

“ Alike in fortune, as alike in fame ! ”

together with *Anarcharsis*, *Agricola*, *Aristides*, *Phocion*, *Sempronius Gracchus*, *Epaminondas*, *Cato the elder* and the younger, and many other no less celebrated worthies, who fell in sad succession under the sword of *Maximilian*.

Our prison was filled with a multitude of persons of different conditions and characters, opinions and countries, and seemed an epitome of the whole world. The mornings were devoted to business, and passed

* In close confinement.

in little occupations, of which the prisoners sometimes complained, but for which perhaps they had reason to be thankful, since less leisure was left them to brood over their misfortunes. Everyone had an appointed task ; in each chamber the prisoners, by turns, lighted the fires, swept the rooms, arranged the beds, and those who could not afford to have dinner from a tavern, or, as the rich were yet permitted, from their own houses, prepared themselves their meals. Every chamber formed a society subject to certain regulations, a new president was chosen every day, or every week, who enforced its laws and maintained good order. In some chambers no person was allowed to sing after ten, in others after eleven at night. This restriction would, perhaps, have been superfluous in England in a similar situation ; but it was highly necessary here, since it prevented such of the prisoners as were more lighthearted than the rest from singing all night long, to the annoyance of others of their neighbours who might think the music which resounded through the prison during the day fully sufficient. The system of equality, whatever opposition it met with in the world, was in its full extent practised in the prison. United by the strong tie of common solemnity, the prisoners considered themselves as bound to soften the general evil by mutual kind offices ; and strangers meeting in such circumstances soon became friends. The poor lived not upon the



BARÈRE.

Greuze School.

(Musée de Versailles.)

The Luxembourg Prison

crumbs which fell from the rich man's table, but shared the comforts of the repast ; and here was found a community of the small stock of goods, which belonged to the whole without the necessity of a requisition. One broom, which was the property of a Countess, was used by twenty delicate hands to sweep the respective apartments ; and a tea-kettle with which a friend furnished my mother was literally, as Dr. Johnson observed of his own, " never allowed time to cool," but was employed from morning till night in furnishing the English with tea.

In the afternoon the prisoners met in an ante-chamber, which commanded a view of the gardens. Here they formed themselves into groups and some conversed, others walked up and down the room ; others gazed from the windows on the walks below, where, perhaps, they recognized a relation or a friend, who, being denied the privilege of visiting the prison, had come to soothe them by a look or tear of sympathy. During the first days of our confinement, the prisoners were permitted to see their friends ; and many a striking contrast of gaiety and sorrow did the ante-chamber then exhibit. In one part of the room, lively young people were amusing their visitors by a thousand little pleasantries on their own situation ; in another, a husband who was a prisoner was taking leave of his wife who had come to see him, and shedding tears over his child who was clinging to his knees, or had

thrown its arms around his neck and refused to be torn from its father. As the number of prisoners increased, which they did so rapidly that in less than a week they were augmented from a hundred to a thousand, the rules of the prison became more severe, and the administrators of the police gave strict orders that no person whatever should be admitted. After this period the wives of some of the prisoners came regularly every day, bringing their children with them to the terrace of the gardens. You often saw the mother weeping, and the children stretching out their little hands and pointing to their fathers, who stood with their eyes fixed upon the objects of their affection : but sometimes a surly sentinel repressed their melancholy effusions of tenderness, by calling to the persons in the walk to keep off, and make no signs to the prisoners. In the meantime, among the crowd that filled the public room were fine gentlemen and fine ladies, who had held the highest rank at court, some flirting together, others making appointments for card parties or music in their own apartments in the evening, and others relating to us in pathetic language all they had suffered, and all they had lost by the Revolution. It was impossible not to sympathize in the distresses of some, or avoid wondering at the folly of others, in whom the strong sense of danger could not overcome the feelings of vanity ; and who, although the tremendous decree had just gone forth



NAPOLEON, FIRST CONSUL.

From an Anonymous Picture.

(Musée de Versailles.)

The Luxembourg Prison

making "terror the order of the day," and knowing that the fatal pre-eminence of rank was the surest passport to the guillotine, could not resist using the proscribed nomenclature of "Madame la Duchesse," "Monsieur le Comte," etc., which seemed to issue from their lips like natural melodies to which the ear has long been accustomed, and which the voice involuntarily repeats. There were, however, among the captive nobility many persons who had too much good sense not to observe a different conduct, who had proved themselves real friends to liberty, had made important sacrifices in its cause, and who had been led to prison by revolutionary committees on pretences the most trivial, and sometimes from mistakes the most ludicrous. Such was the fate of the former Count and Countess —, who had distinguished themselves from the beginning of the Revolution by the ardour of their patriotism and the largeness of their civic donations. They had hitherto lived undisturbed in their splendid hotel, and there they might probably have continued to live a little longer, had not the Countess, in an evil hour, sent down to her château a fine marble hearth ; which by some accident was broken in the way. The steward sent a letter, in which, among other things, he mentioned that the "foyer* must be repaired at Paris." This letter was

* "Foyer" means both hearth, and the central point of a system.

intercepted and read by the revolutionary committee. They swore, they raged at the dark designs of aristocracy. "Here," said they, "is a daring plot indeed ! A *foyer* of counter-revolutions, and to be repaired at Paris ! We must instantly seize the authors and the accomplices !" In vain the Countess related the story of the hearth, and asserted that no conspiracy lurked beneath the marble ; both herself and her husband were conducted to the *maison d'arrêt* of their section, from which we saw them arrive at the Luxembourg with about sixty other persons at the hour of midnight, after having been led through the streets in procession by the light of an immense number of flambeaux, and guarded by a whole battalion.

These prisoners had at least the consolation of finding themselves in the society of many of their friends and acquaintances, for all the polite part of the faubourg St. Germain might be said to be assembled at the Luxembourg in mass. Imprisonment here was, however, no longer the exclusive distinction of former nobility, but was extended to great numbers of the former third estate. We had priests, physicians, merchants, shopkeepers, actors and actresses, French valets and English waiting-women, all assembled together in the public rooms ; but in the private apartments Benoit's benevolent heart taught him the most delicate species of politeness, by placing those

The Luxembourg Prison

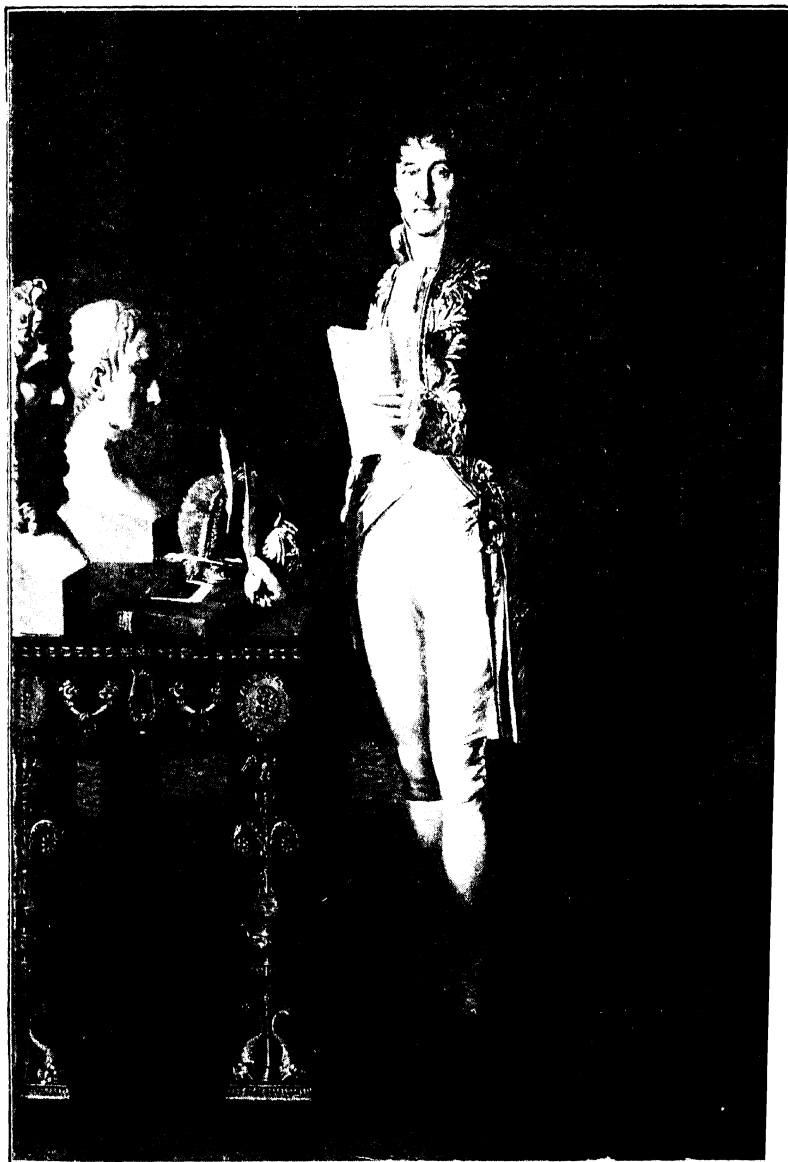
persons together who were most likely to find satisfaction in each other's society.

Amidst many an eloquent tale of châteaux levelled with the ground, and palaces where, to borrow an image of desolation from Ossian, "the fox might be seen looking out of the window," we sometimes heard the complaints of simple sorrow unallied to greatness ; but, like the notes of the starling, "so true in tune to nature were they chanted," that they seized irresistibly on the heart. Of this kind was a scene which passed sometimes between a poor English woman and her dog, which she had brought to keep her company in her captivity. She had been housekeeper in a French family, and, some months before she was imprisoned, had sent her daughter, who was her only child, to her friends in England. The poor woman often exclaimed, while her face was bathed in tears, "Oh, Charlotte, Charlotte, I shall never see you again !" Whenever the dog heard the name of Charlotte, he began to howl in so melancholy a note that it was impossible not to sympathize in his lamentation.

The most frightful circumstance which attended our arrestations were the visits of Henriot, the commandant of the military force in Paris. This wretch had been one of the executioners on the 2nd of September, and was appointed by the commune of Paris on the 31st of May to take the command of the National Guard, to point the cannon against the Convention, to violate

the representation of the people, and to act the prelude of that dark drama of which France has been the desolated scene, and Europe the affrighted spectator. Henriot performed his part so much to the satisfaction of his employers that he was continued in his command ; and it was a part of his office to visit the prisons, and take care that they were properly guarded. The first time I saw him was the day after our confinement. He entered on a sudden our apartment, brandishing his sword, and accompanied by twelve of his officers. There was something in his look which did not give you simply the idea of the ferocity which is sometimes to be found among civilized Europeans ; his fierceness seemed to be of that kind which belongs to a cannibal of New Zealand, and he looked not merely as if he longed to plunge his sabre in our bosoms, but to drink a libation of our blood. He poured forth a volley of oaths and imprecations, called out to know how many guillotines must be erected for the English, and did not leave our chamber till one person who was present had fainted with terror.

In this manner he visited every apartment, spreading consternation and dismay ; and these visits were repeated three or four times in a week. Whenever the trampling of his horse's feet was heard in the courtyard, the first prisoner who distinguished the well-known sound gave the alarm, and in one moment the public room was cleared ; every person flying



LAZARE CARNOT, MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR.

(Musée de Versailles)

The Luxembourg Prison

with the precipitation of fear to his own apartment. Every noise was instantly hushed ; a stillness like that of death pervaded the whole dwelling ; and we remained crouching in our cells, like the Greeks in the cave of Polyphemus, till the monster disappeared. The visits of the administrators of police, though not so terrific as those of Henriot, were no more soothing. Brutality, as well as terror, was the order of the day ; and those public functionaries, whose business it was not only to see that the police of the prison was well regulated, but also to hear if the prisoners had any subject of complaint, used to make the enquiry in a tone of such ferocity that, whatever oppressions might hang on the heart, the lips lost the power of giving them utterance. The visits of the police generally produced some additional rigour to our confinement ; and in a short time all access to us whatever was forbidden except by letters, which were sent open, and delivered to us after being examined by the sentinels. There was sometimes room for deep meditations on the strange caprice and vicissitudes of fortune. We found the ex-minister Amelot a prisoner in the Luxembourg ; he who during his administration had distributed *lettres de cachet* with so much liberality. Tyranny had now changed its instruments, and he was become himself the victim of despotism with new insignia ; the *blue ribband* had given place to the *red cap*, and *de par le roi* was

transformed into *par mesure de sureté générale*. By his order La Tude, whose history is so well known, had been confined thirty years in the Bastille. He was now enjoying the sweets of liberty ; and, before the prison doors were shut against strangers, came frequently to visit some of his friends in the very room where the minister was imprisoned.

Amelot, in a comfortable apartment and surrounded by society, did not bear his confinement with the same firmness as La Tude had borne the solitude of his dungeon, cheered only by the plaintive sounds of his flute of reeds. He was in a short time bereft of his reason ; and, among the wanderings of his imagination, used to address letters to all the kings of Europe and all the emigrant princes, inviting them to sumptuous repasts, to which he sometimes proposed admitting the National Convention, to show that he was above bearing malice.

Whenever any new prisoners arrived, the rest crowded round them, and hastened to calm their minds by the most soothing expressions of sympathy. Not such were the emotions excited by the appearance of Maillard, who was one of the murderers on the 2nd of September, and who had lately been appointed to a command in the revolutionary army ; from which, for some malversations, he was now dismissed, sent to prison, and ordered into close confinement. He had taken a very active part in the late transactions, and

The Luxembourg Prison

had, a few days before his own arrest, conducted to prison two fine boys who were the sons of the ex-minister La Tour du Pui, together with their governor, who was a priest. They were stepping into a carriage, which was to convey them to school, when they were seized upon by Maillard, who, taking the youngest, a child of eleven years of age, by the shoulder, said to him in a stern accent, "You must speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." No sooner was Maillard brought into the ante-chamber, while his room was preparing, than the little boy recognized his acquaintance, and running up to him cried, "Bon jour, Citizen Maillard—you must speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

Nothing could be more painful than the sensations excited by reading the evening papers, which the prisoners were at this time permitted to receive, and which were expected with that trembling anxiety with which, under present evils, we long to look into the promises of futurity. The evening paper seemed to us the book of our destiny ; but there we could trace no soothing characters of hope or mercy. Every line was stamped with "conspiracy," "vengeance," "desolation" and "death."

The walls of our apartment were hung with tapestry which described a landscape of romantic beauty. On that landscape I often gazed till I almost persuaded myself that the scenery was alive around me, so much

did I delight in the pleasing illusion. How often, while my eyes were fixed on that canvas which led my wounded spirit from the cruelty of man to the benignity of God—how often did I wish “for the wings of a dove that I might flee away and be at rest” ! To be seated at the foot of those sheltering hills which embosomed some mimic habitations, or beneath a mighty elm which rose majestically in the foreground of the piece, and spread its thick foliage over a green slope, appeared to me the summit of earthly felicity. Those hills, the torrent-stream which rolled down their steep sides, that shady elm, and all the objects on the tapestry, are indelibly impressed on my memory ; and often when I am wandering through the charming scenes of Switzerland, a country which Nature seems to have created more for ornament than use, where she has spread over every landscape those lavish graces which in other regions belong only to a few favoured spots, I have felt my eyes bathed in tears, while amidst views of overwhelming greatness, some minute object unobserved by others has led *my* imagination to the tapestry and the prison.

Our apartment, with two others adjoining, was separated from the public room by a little passage, and a door which the *huissiers* carefully locked at night. It happened that these apartments were then occupied by two persons in whose society we had passed some of the most agreeable hours of our residence in France.



NELSON.

After Hoppner.

(Musée de Versailles.)

The Luxembourg Prison

These persons were Sillery and La Source, two of the members of the Convention, who had been long in close confinement, and who were now on the point of appearing before that sanguinary tribunal whence, after the most shocking mockery of justice, they were inhumanly dragged to the scaffold. Sillery, on account of his infirmities, had with much difficulty obtained permission from the police for his servant to be admitted into the prison during the day, together with an old female friend who, on the plea of his illness, had implored leave to attend him as his nurse, with that eloquence which belongs to affliction, and which sometimes even the most hardened hearts are unable to resist.

Sillery's friend and his servant being allowed to go in and out of his apartment, the door was not kept constantly locked, although he and La Source were closely confined, and not permitted to have any communication with the other prisoners. The second night of our abode in the Luxembourg, when the prisoners had retired to their respective chambers, and the keeper had locked the outer door which enclosed our three apartments, La Source entered our room. Oh ! how different was this interview from those meetings of social enjoyment that were embellished by the charms of his conversation, always distinguished by a flow of eloquence, and animated by that enthusiastic fervour which peculiarly belonged

Memoirs of the Reign of Robespierre

to his character ! La Source was a native of Languedoc, and united with very superior talents, that vivid warmth of imagination for which the southern provinces of France have been renowned since the period when, awakened by the genial influence of those luxuriant regions, the song of the Troubadours burst from the gloom of Gothic barbarism. Liberty in the soul of La Source was less a principle than a passion, for his bosom beat high with philanthropy ; and in his former situation as a protestant minister he had felt in a peculiar manner the oppression of the ancient system. His sensibility was acute, and his detestation of the crimes by which the Revolution had been sullied was in proportion to his devoted attachment to the cause. La Source was polite and amiable in his manners. He had a taste for music, and a powerful voice ; and sung, as he conversed, with all the energy of feeling. After the day had passed in the fatigue of public debates, he was glad to lay aside the tumult of politics in the evening, for the conversation of some literary men whom he met occasionally at our tea-table. Ah ! how little did we then foresee the horrors of that period when we should meet him in the gloom of a prison, a proscribed victim, with whom this melancholy interview was beset with danger ! We were obliged to converse in whispers, while we kept watch successively at the outer door, that if any step approached he might instantly fly to his chamber. He

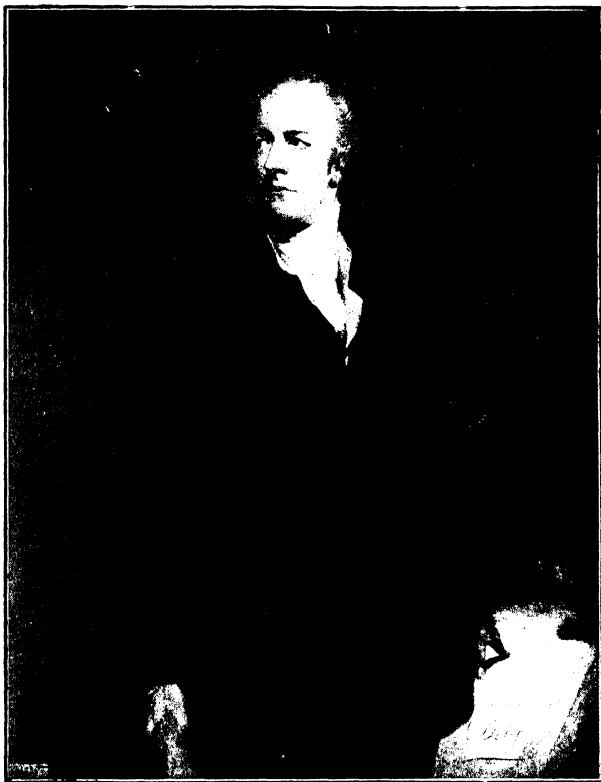
The Luxembourg Prison

had much to ask, having been three months a close prisoner, and knowing little of what was passing in the world : and although he seemed to forget all the horrors of his situation in the consolation he derived from these moments of confidential conversation, yet he frequently lamented that this last gleam of pleasure which was shed over his existence was purchased at the price of our captivity. In the solitude of his prison no voice of friendship, no accents of pity had reached his ear ; and after our arrival he used through the lonely day to count the hours till the prison gates were closed, till all was still within its walls, and no sound was heard without except at intervals the hoarse cry of the sentinels, when he hastened to our apartment. The discovery of these visits would indeed have exposed us to the most fatal consequences, but our sympathy prevailed over our fears ; nor could we, whatever might be the event, refuse our devoted friend this last melancholy satisfaction. La Source at his second visit was accompanied by Sillery, the husband of Madame de Sillery, whose writings are so well known in England. Sillery was about sixty years of age ; had lived freely, like most men of his former rank in France, and from this dissipated life had more the appearance of age than belonged to his years. His manners retained the elegance by which that class was distinguished which Mr. Burke has denominated “ the Corinthian capital of polished

society." Sillery had a fine taste for drawing, and during his confinement displayed the powers of his pencil by tracing beautiful landscapes. He also amused himself by reading history, and, possessing considerable talents for literature, had recorded with a rich warmth of colouring the events of the Revolution, in which he had been a distinguished actor, and of which he had treasured up details precious for history. With keen regret he told me that he had committed several volumes of manuscript to the flames, a sad sacrifice to the Omars of the day.

The mind of Sillery was somewhat less fortified against his approaching fate than that of La Source. The old man often turned back on the past and wept, and sometimes enquired with an anxious look, if we believed there was any chance of his deliverance. Alas ! I have no words to paint the sensations of those moments ! To know that the days of our fellow captives were numbered—that they were doomed to perish—that the bloody tribunal before which they were going to appear was but the pathway to the scaffold—to have the painful task of stilling our feelings, while we endeavoured to soothe the weakness of humanity by hopes which we knew were fallacious, was a species of misery almost insupportable.

La Source often spoke of his wife with tender regret. He had been married only a week when he was chosen a member of the legislative assembly,



WILLIAM PITT.

By Healy, after Lawrence.

(Musée de Versailles.)

The Luxembourg Prison

and was obliged to hasten to Paris, while his wife remained at Languedoc to take care of an aged mother. When the legislative assembly was dissolved La Source was immediately elected a member of the National Convention, and could find no interval in which to visit his native spot, or his wife, whom he saw no more. In his meditations on the chain of political events he mentioned one little incident which seemed to hang on his mind with a sort of superstitious feeling. A few days after the 10th of August (1792) he dined in the faubourg St. Antoine with several members of the legislative assembly, who were the most distinguished for their talents and patriotism. They were exulting in the birth of the new republic and the glorious part they were to act as its founders, when a citizen of the faubourg, who had been invited to partake of the repast, observed that he feared a different destiny awaited them.

“As you have been the founders of the republic,” said he, “you will also be its victims. In a short time you will be obliged to impose restraints and duties on the people, to whom your enemies and theirs will represent you as having overthrown regal power only to establish your own. You will be accused of aristocracy ; and I foresee,” he added with much perturbation, “that you will all perish on the scaffold.” The company smiled at his singular prediction ; but during the ensuing winter, when the

storm was gathering over the political horizon, La Source recalled the prophecy, and sometimes reminded Vergniaud of the man of the faubourg St. Antoine. Vergniaud had little heeded the augur, but a few days previous to the 31st of May (1793) when the Convention was for the first time besieged, La Source said again to Vergniaud, "Well, what think you of the prophet of the faubourg?" "The prophet of the faubourg," answered Vergniaud, "was in the right."

The morning now arrived when La Source and Sillery, together with nineteen other members of the Convention, were led before the revolutionary tribunal. When the guards who were to conduct them arrived, the other prisoners crowded to the public room to see them pass, and we shut ourselves up in our own apartment. They returned about five in the evening; soon after which their counsel arrived, and we had no opportunity of seeing them till midnight, when they related to us what had passed. The conduct of the judges and the aspect of the jury were calculated to banish every gleam of hope from the bosoms of the prisoners. The former permitted with reluctance anything to be urged in their defence, and the latter listened with impatience, casting upon their victims looks of atrocity in which they might easily read their fate; yet in spite of these unhappy omens our friends returned from the tribunal with their minds much

P R O P O S A L S

For PRINTING by SUBSCRIPTION,

In TWO VOLUMES, 12mo,

Elegantly printed, Price Six Shillings,

P O E M S

O N

VARIOUS SUBJECTS,

THE GREATER NUMBER NOT HITHERTO PUBLISHED:

By MISS HELEN MARIA WILLIAMS.

The Books will be delivered to the Subscribers in April next.

The whole, or the half, of the Money to be paid at the Time
of subscribing, at the Option of the Subscriber.

SUBSCRIPTIONS received by the AUTHOR, No 1,
Richmond-Buildings, Dean-Street, Soho; Mr. CADELL, in the
Strand; Mellis. ROBINSONS, in Pater-noster-Row; and Mr.
HOOKHAM, New Bond-Street.

RECEIVED of *Mr. J. S. Barford* -
Six Shillings, being the *Price* of the Subscription for
Two Volumes of POEMS, which I promise to deliver
agreeably to the Proposals.

H. M. Williams.

SUBSCRIPTION LEAFLET FOR A NEW EDITION OF THE POEMS OF
H. M. WILLIAMS (1822) BEARING HER SIGNATURE.

(Bodleian Library)

The Luxembourg Prison

elevated. La Source described in his eloquent language the noble enthusiasm of liberty, the ardent love of their country, the heroical contempt of death which animated his colleagues, whom he had not seen for some time, since they had been transferred to the Conciergerie, while himself and Sillery had obtained permission to remain at the Luxembourg upon the certificates of their physicians that they were too ill to be removed without danger. La Source declared that ancient history offered no model of public virtue beyond that which was exhibited by his friends at the tribunal, and who in their prison, blending with the fortitude of Romans the gaiety of Frenchmen, and being confined in one apartment, passed the short interval of life which was left in conversation and cheerful repasts, which were usually concluded with patriotic songs.

“You,” said Vergniaud to La Source when they met at the tribunal, “you will perhaps find something to regret in the loss of life. You have a glimpse in the gardens of the Luxembourg which may remind you there is something beautiful in nature. But we who live in human shambles, who every day see fresh victims dragged to execution, we are become so familiarized with death, that we look on it with unconcern.”

A few days before the sanguinary trial ended (trial ended October 31st, 1793) the administration of the

police sent orders that the English women confined in the Luxembourg should be removed the next day to a convent in the faubourg St. Antoine. With what keen regret La Source and Sillery received this intelligence ! A thousand and a thousand times they thanked us for the dangers we had risked in receiving them, and for the sympathy which had soothed the last hours of their existence. A thousand times they declared that if it were possible their lives might be preserved, they should consider themselves for ever bound to us by the most sacred ties of gratitude and friendship. But they felt, alas ! how small was the chance that we should meet again in this world. Sillery cut off a lock of his white hair, which he begged I would preserve for his sake, and La Source gave me the same relic. They embraced us with much emotion. They prayed that the blessing of God might be upon us ; we mingled our tears together, and parted to meet no more !

Let me, before I conduct you to our new prison, give you a short account of the political events and their causes which ended in this system of cruelty and crimes.



HELEN MARIA WILLIAMS.

Portrait taken February 1st, 1816, and chosen by her in 1822
to serve as Frontispiece for a new edition of her Poems.

(Bodleian Library.)

II

THE JACOBIN CONQUEST

AFTER the downfall of royalty, the commune of Paris claimed an equal right to share with the Jacobins the honours of the victory ; but, dissatisfied with the little credit given to the services it had rendered during the struggle, it took advantage of the imbecility of the legislative assembly then expiring, and had already erected itself into a rival power before the Convention had opened its first debates. The pretence of making extraordinary exertions to oppose the march of the enemy towards Paris had led the commune, amidst a multiplicity of other acts of rebellion, to arrogate the functions of the representatives of the people ; and having at the fatal period of the massacres of September (1792) humbled the legislative assembly to the dust, they thought that the same daring conduct would give them the same superiority over the National Convention. But in this calculation they were deceived. Robespierre and his adherents, who had hitherto directed their counsels, now aspired to higher destinies, and although solicitous to make the commune an auxiliary in their designs, were unwilling that it should become their rival. In the

new election of representatives, all those were excluded who had been influenced by the court, or who had opposed from purer motives the Republican Party. Although this Party gained a considerable reinforcement by the new election, yet the dread of returning royalty, with all the severity of the old system, had operated so powerfully on the minds of the people of the departments, that many deputies were chosen whose pretensions to this trust arose more from the strength of their lungs than of their talents, and whose harangues made up in noise what they wanted in argument ; while the still greater dread of the return of those horrors which the commune had just been exercising had so intimidated the citizens of Paris, that a part of their deputation to the Convention, at the head of which was Robespierre, triumphing over the fears they had excited, took their seats rather as the conquerors than the representatives of the people.

While the municipality laboured to win over the sections of Paris, the Jacobins made proselytes to their system of anarchy by their affiliations and correspondence in the departments ; and before the existing government was fully aware of the extent of the conspiracy, or could collect sufficient energy to counteract it, the faction had gained a most alarming ascendancy ; and although they formed a very small minority in the Convention, their influence both in the executive part of the government and amongst



ROBESPIERRE.

By Houdon.

The Jacobin Conquest

the constituted authorities was sufficient to outweigh that of the representation itself. Every concession made to the conspirators served only to increase the insolence of their demands, and although the most eloquent members of the Convention, Guadet, Vergniaud, Pétion, Louvet, Brissot and La Source, gave incessant warnings of the progress of the anarchists towards the dissolution of all order in the State, yet, like Cassandra, they were believed only when the prophecies were fulfilled.

The first attempt made on the national representatives by the commune of Paris and the Jacobins ought to have been punished as an act of rebellion against the sovereignty of the people. But an ill-judged application of the principles of individual liberty, a too delicate regard for the rights of persons, led on the majority of the Convention to the permission of offences, of which they took no measures to stop the progress, till the conspiracy had acquired such strength as made every exertion against it ineffectual.

The treason of Dumouriez had furnished the faction with new resources for calumny against the Republican Party, with some of whom he had formerly been connected ; for as the faction was in the constant habit of denouncing indiscriminately every agent of the republic, the completion of one prophecy gave an air of credit to the rest. Although the conspirators had acquired considerable influence from the assistance

given them by the commune and the Jacobins, they perceived that the object which they had in view would never be fully attained till they had gained so absolute a control over the Convention as to make it, like the ancient parliaments, the registers of their imperial edicts. To this end all their efforts were directed, and they conceived the project of violating the national representation itself, and tearing from it the most eloquent and intrepid defenders of its rights. To carry their plot into execution it was necessary to cover it with the veil of the wish of the people, of whom a few hired desperadoes and other ignorant and seduced persons became the representatives, bearing petitions written by the conspirators themselves, praying the Convention to drive from their seats a certain number whom they marked as unworthy of their confidence or that of the nation. The indignation of the Convention being roused at these attempts, they instituted a commission of enquiry to search into the causes of this conspiracy. This commission, in pursuance of the powers it had received, after mature examination arrested Hébert, one of the municipal chiefs, and gave notice to the Convention that they were prepared to make their report. The conspirators, feeling that their crimes were on the point of being brought to light, the discovery of which would annihilate their project, threw off the mask, and brought forward the commune of Paris to demand



THE SQUARE OF THE HULL-DE-VILLE JULY 14th, 1789.

The Jacobin Conquest

not only the dismissal of the commission which the Convention had created, but the arrestation of the members who composed it, together with the twenty-two deputies of the Convention the most eminent for their virtue and talents.

The Convention for several days withstood every effort that was made to shake its firmness, but the chiefs of the conspiracy had proceeded too far to be stopped in their career by such considerations. However, they found more intrepidity and firmness in the Convention than they expected, and therefore determined to employ their last expedient. The ringing of the tocsin and the firing of alarm guns had excited the attention of the citizens of Paris for two days, when on the third (May 31st, 1793) the beating to arms informed them that they were going to be put into insurrection. The national guard, called to arms for a cause which was unknown to them, were conducted to the hall of the Convention where Henriot, the commander of the military force, who had been given that post by the conspirators for that purpose, had ordered them to assemble. The Convention was surrounded till nearly midnight by the military force, nor was any member permitted to leave the hall ; but although besieged the assembly was not yet conquered. The day passed in the most frightful tumult, and Rabaut de St. Etienne in vain stood at the tribune, holding in his hand the report of the commission of

twelve upon the conspiracy of the commune, together with the proofs of its authenticity. His voice was lost in the horrible vociferations of the tribunes, and the murmurs of the faction within the hall. At length, finding all his efforts ineffectual, he left the assembly in despair.

The assault of the Convention on the 31st of May, though it had produced the most horrible disorder, had not forced from the assembly the decree of arrestation. But Robespierre, with his commune, his Jacobins and his bodyguard of revolutionary women, who were in the van of the attack, and stood in the passages of the Convention armed with poniards which they pointed at the bosoms of such of the deputies as attempted to leave the hall, had gone too far to recede. The 1st of June they employed in preparations for a fresh attack, and on the 2nd again the tocsin rang, again the whole city was under arms, and the Convention was again invested by sixty thousand men.

It does not appear that all the adherents of the conspirators, or rather the different factions in league with them, were acquainted with all the means which Robespierre, Marat, and the municipality, the original authors of the plot, meant to employ. La Croix, a member of the Convention who had been repulsed in endeavouring to go out of the hall, protested with vehemence against this violation of their liberties ; and when Henriot, in receiving orders from the



THE HEADS OF THE MARQUIS DE LAUNEY, GOVERNOR OF THE BASTILLE, AND OF DE LOSME-SALBRAY, STAFF MAJOR OF THE BASTILLE, CARRIED THROUGH THE STREETS OF PARIS, JULY 14TH, 1789.

Dutch Engraving.

(Musée Carnavalet.)

The Jacobin Conquest

president to draw off his troops, replied that as soon as he had executed the orders of the people he would obey those of the Convention, and threatened that if they refused to deliver up to justice the twenty-two deputies whom he called traitors, he would order the cannon to be fired on the hall, Danton, with great indignation, imprecated vengeance on the head of the ruffian, which, some months after, at the period of his own fall, was in the act of accusation alleged against him as a crime. In vain did the Convention, partaking of Danton's indignation, hope to obtain their liberty by decreeing that the officers of the post next the entrance of the hall should be called to the bar. Two of them had received no orders, and a third informed them that he was himself consigned by a few strangers who did not appear to him acquainted even with military forms. These strangers were ordered to the bar, but they refused to attend, and thus this assembly, which talked of nothing less than bringing princes and kings in chains to their feet, were made prisoners in their very sanctuary by a few hirelings, of whom no other description was given than that they were strangers and wore moustaches. This was an indignity not to be borne. The president, therefore, proposed that the assembly in a body should go out of the hall. This was decreed, and the sentinels, feeling themselves likely to be overpowered, gave way. The deputies paraded in the garden, expecting every moment to

be massacred ; but the conspirators, who directed their motions, led them back again to the hall, observing that the Convention, after so striking a proof, could have no doubt of their being at liberty.

Previously to this mock parade, Barère, who had been weighing the probabilities of success on either side, and examining which party would have the ascendancy, at length invited the proscribed deputies, for the sake of peace and for the good of the State, to submit and devote themselves to their country. To this admonition three of them acceded, but Barbaroux asserted that he had no right to give in his dismission, nor could he obey any other mandate than that of the people who, having invested him with the power, had alone the right to take it from him. With more vehemence Lanjuinais exclaimed that he would remain at his post to his latest breath, or till he was torn from it by force. His intrepidity provoked the conspirators to rage and tumult. “ Citizens,” said he, “ we have beheld in barbarous countries the people leading human victims to the altar, after crowning them with flowers ; but we never heard that the priests who were about to sacrifice them treated them with insult. I repeat that I have no right to lay aside the august character with which the people have honoured me. Therefore, expect from me neither self-dismission, nor voluntary suspension for a moment.”

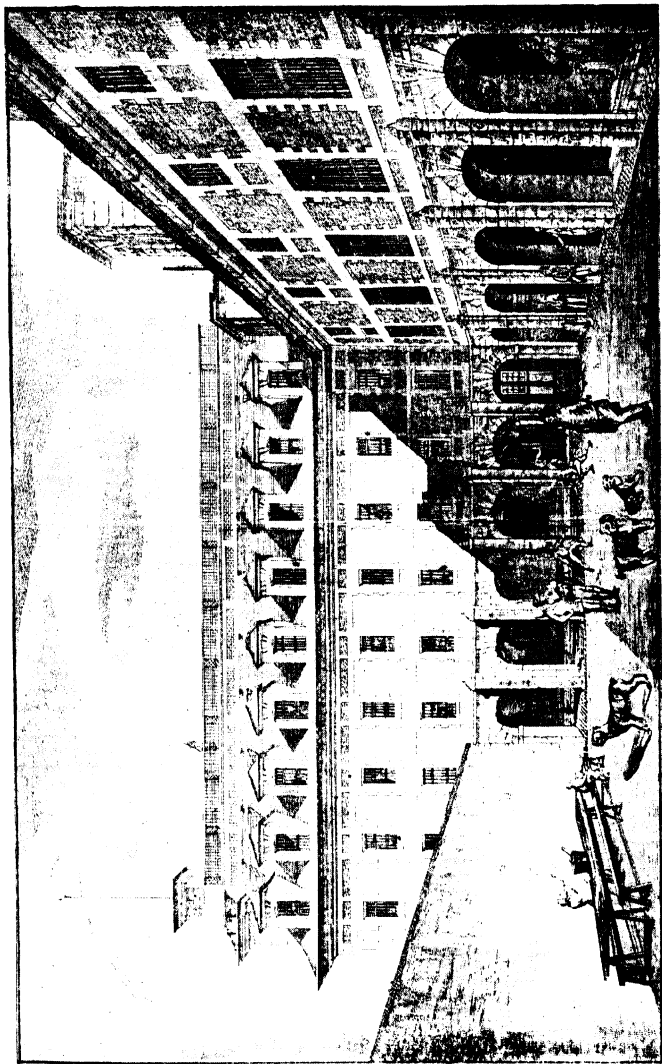
The Jacobin Conquest

This courageous reply to their fury appalled the tyrants ; and had Vergniaud, Rabaut, Brissot, and others whose names were in the conspirators' list, been then at their post ; had they seconded their proscribed colleagues at this critical moment with the thunder of their eloquence, the project of the conspirators might easily have been defeated, and they might have saved both themselves and the republic. But while the conspirators were perpetrating this abominable deed, they were deliberating in the house of Guadet about the means that should be taken to avoid it and, deceived by a report which a friend, unhappily ill-informed, conveyed to them that the blood of their colleagues was flowing, and believing it to be too late to make any further struggle, they suffered the decree of arrestation to be carried without opposition.

With many others I saw parts of the execution of this conspiracy. I saw the armed force surrounding the hall, but was ignorant of what was passing within. I beheld from a window that overlooked the Tuileries the Convention in full procession, but I could not account for this singular parade, nor was it till midnight that I learned the history of that day, which some of the deputies related to us. Among them was Barère. With eyes full of tears he lamented to us the fate of his friends and the total ruin of the republic—that same Barère who a few months after provoked and gloried in their murder.

Memoirs of the Reign of Robespierre

Although the citizens remained unmoved at these violations, a considerable number of the departments felt the indignity, and prepared to avenge the national honour. Some made eloquent remonstrances at the bar of the Convention ; some proposed sending no further contributions to Paris, while others took arms to suppress the rebellion of the commune against the republic. For some time the arrival of the departmental force was expected ; but the conspirators, who foresaw this formidable opposition to the accomplishment of their designs, had the prudence to provide against it by sending previously into the departments as many of their emissaries as they could spare without weakening their forces at home. The counterpart of the scene acted at Paris between the conspirators and the Convention, was attempted at Lyons, and the same day was appointed in both cities for the accomplishment of their purpose. The combat was vigorously supported on both sides. Victory remained doubtful for a long time, and it was not till midnight that the citizens took the town hall, which was the headquarters of the conspirators, who were imprisoned and their leader, Chalier, condemned to death.



THE MADELONNETTES PRISON, A MAISON D'ARRÊT UNDER THE REIGN OF ROBESPIERRE (RUE DES
FONTAINES DU TEMPLE).

(Hartmann Collection.)

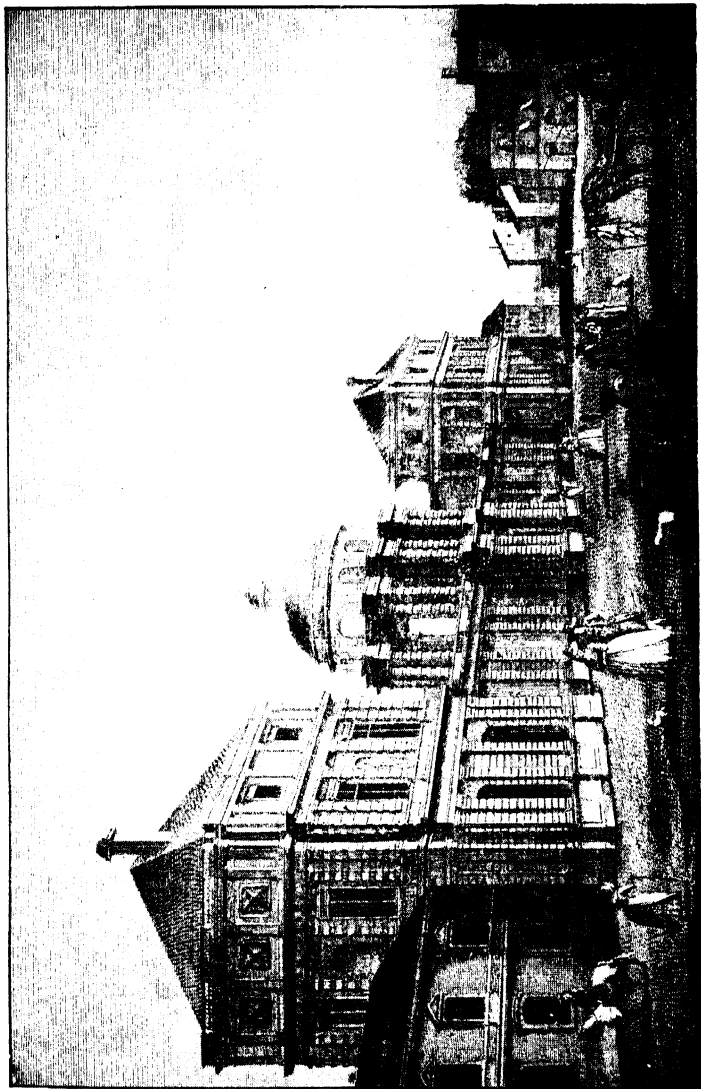
III

STREAMS OF BLOOD

THE Royalists had entire possession of the Loire almost as far as Paris, and menaced Rochelle on the one side while they besieged Nantes on the other, and opened a passage into the departments which made part of the former province of Brittany.

The faction at Paris did not fail to improve the events of the Vendée to their own advantage. Pétion, Buzot, Rabaud St. Etienne, Isnard, Lanjuinais, Barbaroux, Guadet, Louvet and others of the proscribed deputies having made their escape, the conspirators declared, in an address to the departments, that the project of the deputies who were still in arrestation was evidently the same as that of their colleagues, who were gone to facilitate the march of the rebels and aid them in the establishment of the royal power. This calumny, which was refuted by every address received from the departments, formed the basis of the accusation which was framed against the Gironde; and the founders and most strenuous supporters of the republic were soon after dragged to the scaffold as the advocates and protectors of royalty.

In proportion as the departments relaxed in their energy, the ferocity of the conspirators increased. An event also happened at this period which, from the calumnies to which it gave rise, and the consequences it produced, proved fatal to the arrested deputies. This was the assassination of Marat. In the first dawn of the conspiracy Marat became a principal instrument in the hands of the traitors, who found him well fitted for their purposes ; and being saved from the punishment which usually follows personal insult by the contempt which the deformity and diminutiveness of his person excited, he became the habitual retailer of all the falsehoods and calumnies which were invented by his party against every man of influence or reputation. He was the Thersites of the Convention, whom no one would deign to chastise ; for his extravagance made his employers often disclaim him as a fool, while the general sentiment he excited was the sort of antipathy we feel for a loathsome reptile. His political sentiments often varied, for he sometimes exhorted the choice of a chief, and sometimes made declamations in favour of a limited monarchy ; but what rendered him useful to the conspirators was his readiness to publish every slander which they framed, and to exhort to every horror which they meditated. His rage for denunciation was so great that he became the dupe of the idle ; and his daily paper contained the names of great criminals



THE LUXEMBOURG.

Drawing by Lallemand.

(Hartmann Collection.)

Streams of Blood

who existed only in the imagination of those who imposed on his credulous malignity.

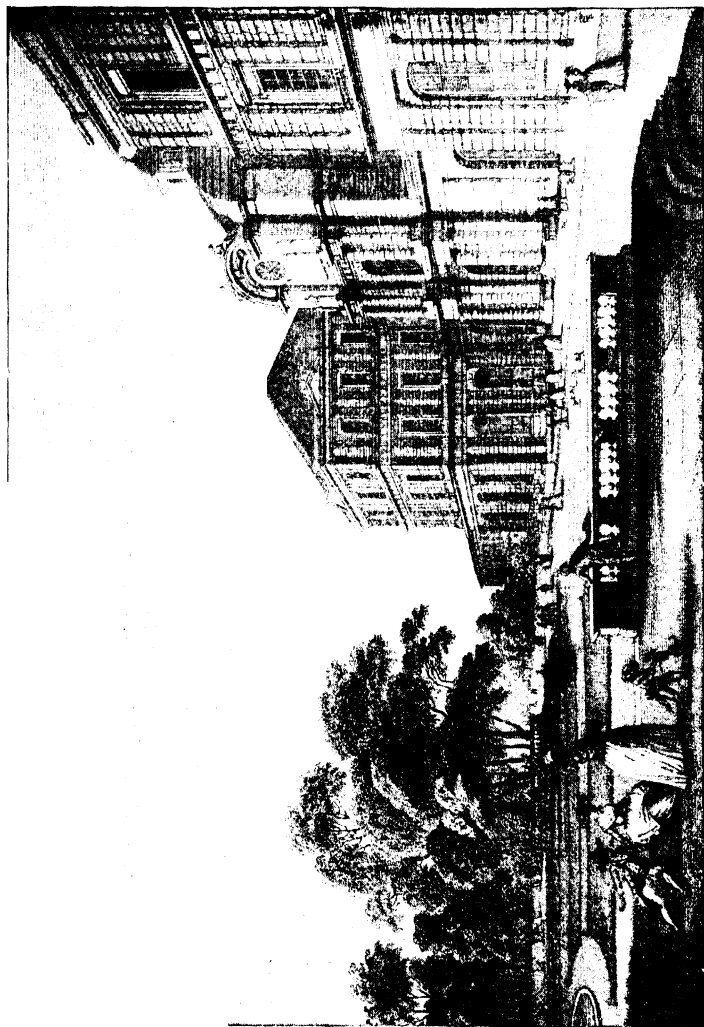
After this first preacher of blood had performed the part allotted to him in the plan of evil, he was confined to his chamber by a lingering disease to which he was subject, and of which he would probably soon have died. But he was assassinated in his bath by a young woman who had travelled with this intention from Caen in Normandy. Charlotte Anne Marie Corday was a native of St. Saturnin in the department of the Orne. She appears to have lived in a state of literary retirement with her father, and by the study of ancient and modern historians to have imbibed a strong attachment to liberty. She had been accustomed to assimilate certain periods of ancient history with the events that were passing before her, and was probably excited by the examples of antiquity to the commission of a deed which she believed with fond enthusiasm would deliver and save her country.

Being at Caen when the citizens of the department were enrolling themselves to march to the relief of the Convention, the animation with which she saw them devoting their lives to their country led her to execute, without delay, the project she had formed. Under pretence of going home, she came to Paris, and the third day after her arrival obtained admission to Marat. She had invented a story to deceive him ; and when he promised her that all the promoters of

the insurrection in the departments should be sent to the guillotine, she drew out a knife which she had purchased for the occasion and plunged it into his breast. She was immediately apprehended and conducted to the Abbaye prison, from which she was transferred to the Conciergerie, and brought before the revolutionary tribunal.

She acknowledged the deed, and justified it by asserting that it was a duty she owed her country and mankind to rid the world of a monster, whose sanguinary doctrines were framed to involve the country in anarchy and civil war, and asserted her right to put Marat to death as a convict already condemned by the public opinion. She trusted that her example would inspire the people with that energy which had been at all times the distinguishing characteristic of republicans, and which she defined to be that devotedness to our country which renders life of little comparative estimation.

Her deportment during the trial was modest and dignified. There was so engaging a softness in her countenance, that it was difficult to conceive how she could have armed herself with sufficient intrepidity to execute the deed. Her answers to the interrogatories of the court were full of point and energy. She sometimes surprised the audience by her wit, and excited their admiration by her eloquence. Her face sometimes beamed with sublimity, and was sometimes



Drawing by Lallemand,

INTERIOR OF THE LUXEMBOURG.

(Hartmann Collection.)

Streams of Blood

covered with smiles. At the close of her trial she took three letters from her bosom, and presented them to the judges, and requested they might be forwarded to the persons to whom they were addressed. Two were written to Barbaroux, in which with great ease and spirit she relates her adventures from her leaving Caen to the morning of her trial. The other was an affectionate and solemn adieu to her father. She retired while the jury deliberated on their verdict; and when she again entered the tribunal there was a majestic solemnity in her demeanour which perfectly became her situation. She heard her sentence with attention and composure, and after conversing for a few minutes with her counsel and a friend of mine who had sat near her during the trial, and whom she requested to discharge some trifling debts she had incurred in the prison, she left the court with the same serenity, and prepared herself for the last scene.

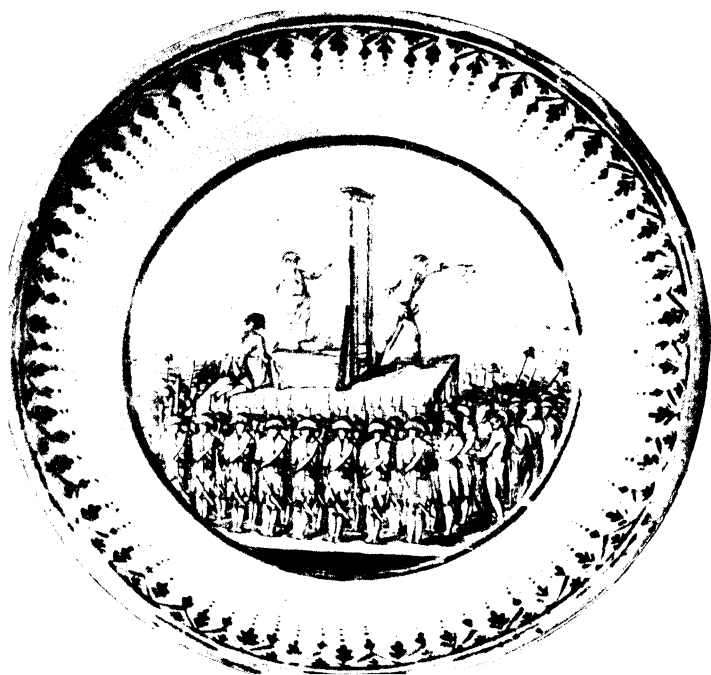
She had concluded her letter to her father with this verse of Corneille :—

“ Le crime fait la honte, et non pas l'échafaud,”

and it is difficult to conceive the kind of heroism which she displayed on the way to execution. The women who were called “furies of the guillotine,” and who had assembled to insult her on leaving the prison, were awed into silence by her demeanour, while some of the spectators uncovered their heads

before her, and others gave loud tokens of applause. There was such an air of chastened exultation thrown over her countenance that she inspired sentiments of love rather than sensations of pity. She ascended the scaffold with undaunted firmness and, knowing that she had only to die, was resolved to die with dignity. She had learned from her jailer the mode of punishment, but was not instructed in the detail, and when the executioner attempted to tie her feet to the plank she resisted, from an apprehension that he had been ordered to insult her, but on his explaining himself she submitted with a smile. When he took off her handkerchief, the moment before she bent under the fatal stroke, she blushed deeply and her head, which was held up to the multitude the moment after, exhibited this last impression of offended modesty.

The leaders of the faction, who thought every measure good that could be made subservient to their purpose, found this event too replete with favourable circumstances to be neglected. Marat, whom they had thrown aside to die at leisure, unless perchance he should have lived to share the fate to which they afterwards condemned their other agents, was now restored to more than his ancient honours, was proclaimed a martyr, and his death ordered to be lamented as an irreparable loss to the republic. The conspirators declared that no further doubt of the federalism of the departments remained. The death



SAUCER À LA GUILLOTINE.

(Taken from *The Last Year of Marie Antoinette*, by M. André Marty.)

Streams of Blood

of Marat was the point of conviction. Every member of the Mountain was to be assassinated in his turn, and the traitors of the departments had their accomplices in Paris who had whetted their poniards to involve the city in destruction. Though the Parisians were not sufficiently credulous to believe these calumnies, the faction made them the pretence to proceed to the further commission of crimes, and while they endeavoured to amuse the people with what they called the inauguration of Marat and of Chalier, they were meditating the murder of the deputies whom they had driven from the legislature.

It was impossible to contemplate without indignation and despair that glorious revolution which had opened to mankind the brightest prospects of happiness, and which had promised the most beneficial effects to the world, become the sport of the cruel and the prey of the rapacious ; to see a people who were called to liberty bending their necks like the votaries of the storied assassin of the mountain, at the nod of their tyrant ; to see a nation which had possessed Rousseau, Mably and Voltaire, prostrate in frantic enthusiasm before the shrine of Marat, like the idolaters of Montapama, whose devotion rose in proportion to the hideousness of their gods.

Every day some pretended plot was discovered, some dark conspiracy, attributed successively to nobles, priests, bankers and foreigners, was dragged

to light ; but the specimens produced of these counter-revolutionary projects were often such as did little honour to the invention of those by whom they were exhibited. Sometimes letters were found from agents of the coalesced powers ; but they were generally so ill fabricated that they only deceived those who could not read them.

The departments having submitted to the usurpers, they now began their measures of severity against those who had resisted their authority. The general denomination for disaffection to their principles was that of being suspected ; and accordingly a decree was issued to arrest all those who came under the title (decree of August 12th, 1793). The revolutionary tribunal not having all the energy necessary to carry into execution the plans they were meditating, was denounced for its *moderantism* and the members of which it was composed, renewed (decrees of July 30th-31st and August 3rd, 1793).

A certain class of the women of Paris, who gave themselves the title of revolutionary women, had been serviceable auxiliaries to the conspirators, and had taken the place of the *poissardes* who, not having all the energy which the present exigencies required, had yielded the palm to their revolutionary successors. These female politicians held deliberative assemblies, and afterwards presented their views to the Convention, while they influenced its debates by their vocifera-



By Rioult.

THE COUNTESS DE GENLIS.

(Musée de Versailles.)

Streams of Blood

tions in the tribunes, which they now exclusively occupied.

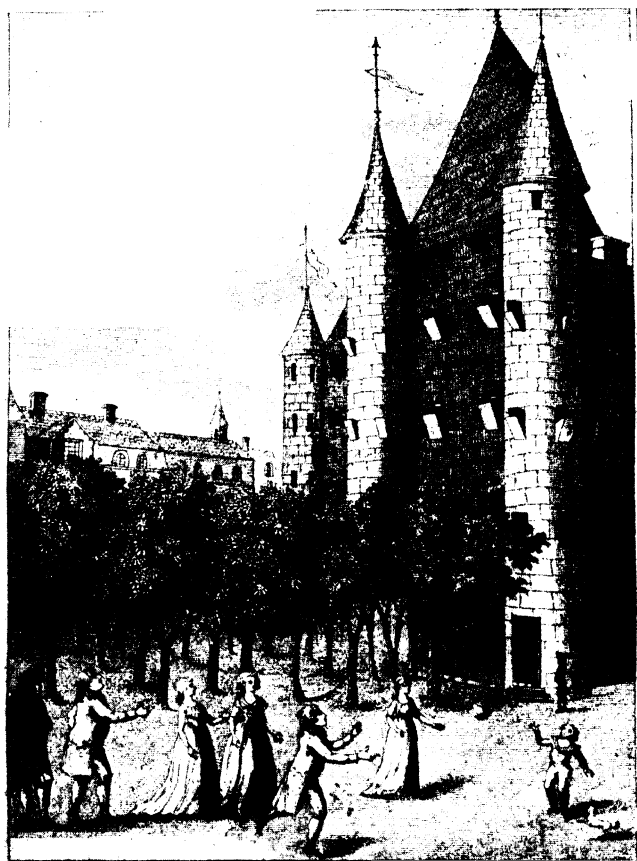
On the days of tumult which preceded the 31st of May (1793) they had mounted guard in person at the Convention, and prevented the execution of certain orders which they disliked. They now presented themselves at the bar of the assembly, and demanded the exclusion of the former nobles from every function, civil or military, the renewal of all the administrations throughout the republic, the examination of the conduct of the ministers, the arrest of every suspected person, the raising of the whole nation in a mass, and obliging the women to wear red caps. The Convention having shown some disinclination to comply with these modest requisitions, these female politicians insulted some of the members, and the society was dissolved by a decree.

To reconcile the nation to the assumption of their new power, the conspirators thought it necessary to show their distinguishing attachment to what they called "the people" by the exercise of every kind of persecution against what they called "aristocracy," an appellation by no means confined to the adherents of the former court of the nobility. To the "aristocracy of talent" succeeded the "aristocracy of commerce," which signified that he who enriched himself while he enriched his country by the supply of its wants, was an object of suspicion, or a counter-revolutionist.

The tyrants in power therefore conceived the project of reducing every article of merchandise and subsistence to what they called the *maximum*, and obliged every merchant and shopkeeper to sell his goods to the public at the prescribed rate, whatever might have been the first cost. Though it was evident to the most superficial observer that such a measure must be eventually destructive of commerce, and productive of the evil it was intended to prevent ; yet, as it was an evil that but remotely affected the consumer, it was calculated to please the lower class of people.

The faction, armed with the absolute power they had usurped, fancied they could control all possible circumstances, and though they could not but perceive that the manufacturer must necessarily cease his labour when the new materials exceeded the stated price of the goods he exposed to sale, and that the merchant could no longer go on with his commerce when the cargo which he had purchased abroad was struck with the revolutionary *maximum* on its entrance into port ; though they could not but see that it was a law fraught with every evil, yet, as it was a blow at the aristocracy of commerce, and a revolutionary measure, it was proposed and adopted.

While they were thus persuading the people what interest they took in their welfare by the introduction of plenty, in the extinction of monopolies, and the reduction of the price of merchandise, they were



*La famille Royale se promenant dans le jardin
du Temple, et Cléry y jouant avec le Dauphin.*

STAMP OF THE REVOLUTIONARY EPOCH.

(Musée Carnarudet.)

Streams of Blood

equally solicitous to show their regard for the public safety by the punishment of traitors and conspirators. For a long time the Jacobins had demanded the trial of Marie Antoinette, whose existence, they declared, endangered that of the republic. She was accordingly arraigned for having committed a series of crimes which, in the language of the indictment, comprehended not merely counter-revolutionary projects, but all the enormities of the Messalinas, Brunehauts, Fredegonds and Medicis. A curious account of the evidence in support of these charges, and the effect which her behaviour produced upon Robespierre, is given by Vilate, a young man of the revolutionary tribunal. The scene passed during the trial at a tavern near the Tuileries, where Vilate was invited to dine with Robespierre, Barère, and St. Just.

“Seated around the table,” he says, “in a close and retired room, they asked me to give them some leading features of the evidence on the trial of the Austrian. I did not forget that expostulation of insulted nature when Hébert, accusing Antoinette of having committed the most shocking crime, she turned with dignity towards the audience and said, ‘I appeal to the conscience and feelings of every mother present, to declare if there be one amongst you who does not shudder at the idea of such horrors.’ Robespierre, struck with this answer as by an electrical stroke, broke his plate with his fork. ‘That block-

Memoirs of the Reign of Robespierre

head Hébert !' cried he, ' as if it were not enough that she was really a Messalina, he must make her an Agrippina also, and furnish her with the triumph of exciting the sympathy of the public in her last moments.' "

Marie Antoinette made no defence, and called no witnesses, alleging that no positive fact had been produced against her. She had preserved a uniform behaviour during the whole of her trial, except when a starting tear accompanied her answer to Hébert. She was condemned about four in the morning (October 16th, 1793), and heard her sentence with composure. But her firmness forsook her in the way from the Court to her dungeon. She burst into tears ; when, as if ashamed of this weakness, she observed to her guards that though she wept at that moment, they should see her go to the scaffold without shedding a tear.

On her way to execution, where she was taken after the accustomed manner in a cart, with her hands tied behind her, she paid little attention to the priest who attended her, and still less to the surrounding multitude. Her eyes, though bent on vacancy, did not conceal the emotion that was labouring at her heart. Her cheeks were sometimes in a singular manner streaked with red, and sometimes overspread with dreadful paleness ; but her general look was that of indignant sorrow. She reached the place of execution

Streams of Blood

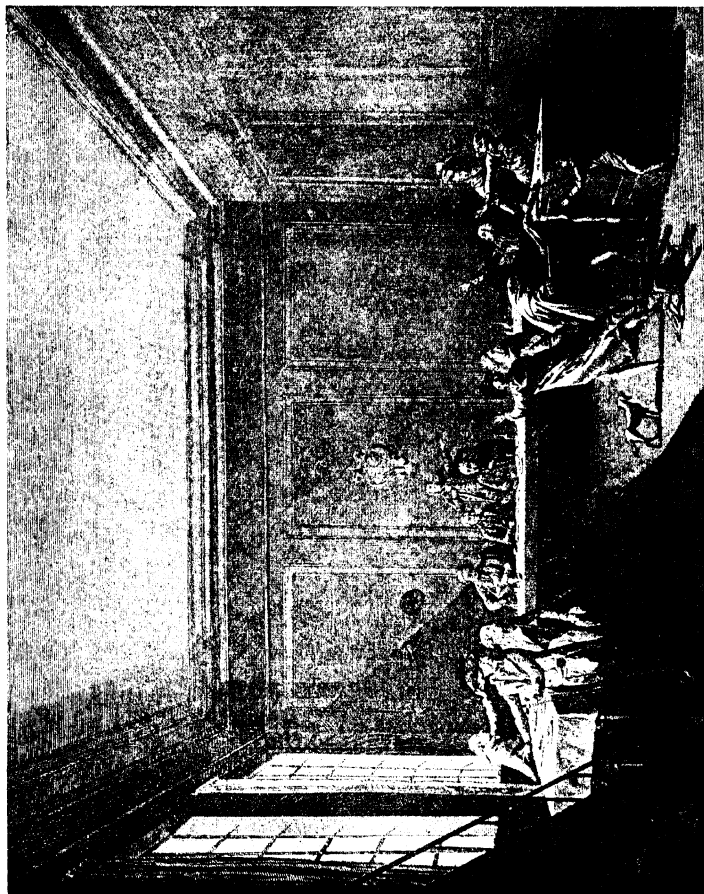
about noon, and when she turned her eyes towards the gardens and the palace, she became visibly agitated. She ascended the scaffold with precipitation, and her head was in a moment held up to the people by the executioner.

The trial of Marie Antoinette was followed by that of the accused deputies. Although those guardians of the public weal, the Jacobins, had repeatedly urged the Convention to bring forward their trial, it had long been delayed from the difficulty of finding any proofs that bore the appearance of probability, and it remained long undecided what should be the charges and who should be the victims. The substance of the accusation was at length founded on a sort of sportive party romance, written by Camille Desmoulins on Brissot and the Brissotins ; and what was meant by the author merely to excite a laugh, was distorted to serve this horrible purpose. Camille, it is said, remonstrated loudly on this perversion of his intentions, and disclaimed any participation in the guilt. He declared that the charges were only extravagances of his own imagination, and that he could not support any of them by evidence. This remonstrance was ineffectual, and the romance formed part of the indictment, which was filled up with charges of royalism and federalism, which being presented to

the assembly for their sanction, the decree of accusation passed without a discussion (decree of 30th October, 1793).

The witnesses in support of the charges consisted principally of the chiefs of the municipality of Paris, who were the original accusers. But the defence which the prisoners made was so entirely destructive of the accusation, that though the judges and the jury had bound up their nature to this execrable deed ; though the audience, like the tribunes of the Jacobins and their Convention, were hired to applaud this crime, the eloquence of the accused drew “ iron tears ” down their cheeks, and convinced the whole tribunal of the infamy and falsehood of the charges. Imagine the remorse with which the minds of the jury must have been wrung, when their employment compelled them to dress out matter for condemnation from the absurd and lying fables of the conspirators, who were called as witnesses to the indictment ; while, to the demonstration even of the most perverse and ignorant, the prisoners refuted every charge with triumph on their accusers ; and if any suspicion had existed with respect to their patriotism or love of the republic, the prosecution would have served to dispel it.

The judges, as well as the jury, although determined to execute their atrocious commission, saw that the defence of the prisoners would carry conviction to the minds of the audience who, notwithstanding their



ASSASSINATION OF LETITIER DE SAINT FARGEAU, AT THE FÉVRIER RESTAURANT,
JANUARY 20TH, 1793.
(Illustrated Pictures of the French Revolution, No. 77.)
Drawn by Stucke-Desfontaines.

Streams of Blood

being hired by the accusers, began to show signs of compassion. The Court, therefore, wrote to the Convention to inform them that if the trials were permitted to proceed, the formalities of the law would reduce them to extreme difficulties, and observed that in a revolutionary process it was not necessary to be encumbered with troublesome witnesses or a long defence. This humane epistle was supported by a deputation of the Jacobins, who spoke a still plainer language by demanding a decree that the accused should be condemned whenever the jury should feel themselves "sufficiently instructed," without attending to the whole of the charge or hearing what the prisoners might have to allege in their defence. To this measure the society was urged by the municipal witnesses, who were stung with shame at seeing their perjuries unveiled.

The decree empowering the jury to stop the prosecution at whatever period they thought proper (decree of October 29th, 1793) was virtually pronouncing the sentence of death; and the tribunal, releasing themselves from the torture they were compelled to suffer while their consciences were every hour more and more loaded with the conviction of the innocence of the victims whose judicial murder they were bound to perpetrate, lost no time in declaring they were sufficiently instructed.

This atrocious condemnation was remonstrated

against by the prisoners in vain. In vain they alleged that against some of them no evidence whatever had been heard, that their names had scarcely been mentioned at the tribunal and that, whatever pretence the jury might have for calling themselves sufficiently instructed respecting the rest, they could not be informed of the crimes of those against whom no witnesses had appeared. The Court, sheltering themselves under the sanction of a decree, were little inclined to give the reasons of their conviction, and therefore replied to the arguments of the prisoners by ordering the military force to take them from the tribunal. Valazé, in a transport of indignation, stabbed himself before the court. Brissot, Vergniaud, Gensonné, La Source, Fonfrède, Sillery, Ducos, Carra, Duperret, Gardien, Duprat, Fauchet, Beauvais, Duchastel, Mainvielle, Lacaze, Lehardy, Boileau, Antiboul and Vigée were led to execution on the following day. Vergniaud, having a presage of his impending fate, had early provided himself with poison, but finding that his young friends, Fonfrède and Ducos, who he had some hope would be spared, were companions of his misfortune, he gave the phial to the officer of the guard, resolving to await the appointed moment and to perish with them.

They met their fate with all the calm of innocence, and breathed their last vows for the safety and liberty of the republic. Those who were the melancholy



EXECUTION OF LOUIS XVI (JANUARY 21ST, 1793).

From an English Engraving.

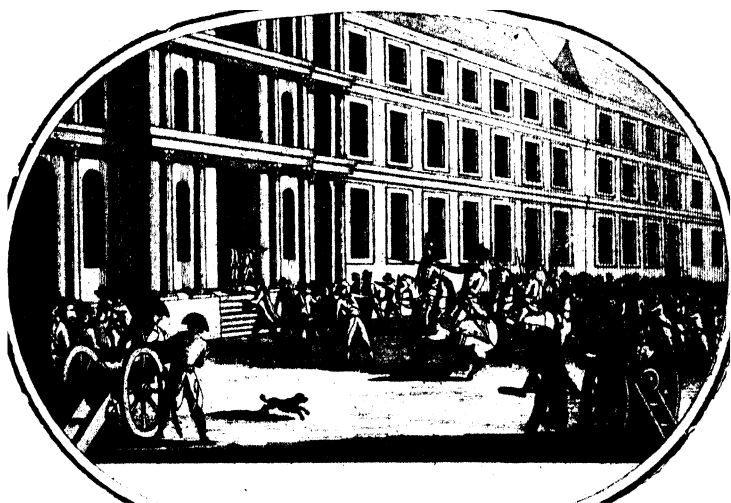
(Harbottle, Co.)

Streams of Blood

witnesses of their last hours in prison, love to relate how they spoke, and felt, and acted. I have been told by one who was their fellow-prisoner and friend, that their minds were in such a state of elevation that no one could approach them with the commonplace and ordinary topics of consolation. Brissot was serious and thoughtful, and at times an air of discontent clouded his brow, but it was evident that he mourned over the fate of his country and not his own. Gensonné, firm and self-collected, seemed fearful of sullyng his lips by mentioning the names of his murderers. He did not utter a word respecting his own situation, but made many observations on the state of the republic, and expressed his ardent wishes for its happiness. Vergniaud was sometimes serious, and sometimes gay. He amused his fellow-prisoners at times with the recital of poetry which he retained in his memory, and sometimes indulged them with the last touches of that sublime eloquence which was now for ever lost to the world. Fonfrède and Ducos relieved the sombre of the piece by the habitual liveliness of their characters, although each lamented the fate of his brother to their respective friends, and sometimes shed tears over the distress and ruin of their wives and children, for both had young families and immense fortunes. Their courage was the more exemplary as their fate was altogether unexpected.

Previously to the imprisonment of the deputies,

while they were yet under arrest in their own houses, I frequently visited those who were in the number of our friends. Vergniaud had long told me that he saw no just foundation for hope, and that he would rather die than live a witness of his country's shame. Fonfrède and Ducos had the full enjoyment of their liberty till the act of accusation appeared, in which they had not the least suspicion that they would be included. The day previous to the reading of this murderous proscription in the Convention, Fonfrède had accompanied us to Montmorency, about four leagues from Paris, where we had wandered till evening, amidst that enchanting scenery which Rousseau once inhabited, and which he had so luxuriously described. Alas ! while the charms of nature had soothed our imaginations, and made us forget awhile the scenes of moral deformity exhibited in the polluted city we had left ; while everything around us breathed delight and the landscape was a hymn to the Almighty, the assassins were at their bloody work and plotting the murder of our friends. The next day Fonfrède was sent to the Conciergerie, and we saw him no more. A week after we were ourselves arrested. He conveyed to us, from his dungeon, his sympathy in our misfortunes, and after his condemnation wrote to bid us a last farewell, but the letter was carried to the committee of general safety and never reached us.



JUNE 2ND, 1793, THE TUILERIES PALACE, WHERE THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WAS SITTING, WAS BESIEGED AND DEPUTIES WHO ATTEMPTED TO LEAVE WERE THREATENED BY THE ARTILLERY.

Streams of Blood

They were condemned at midnight (October 30th). When they returned to their prison, they gave the appointed signal of their fate to their fellow-prisoners, whose seclusion afforded them no other means of knowing it by singing a parody of the chorus of the Marseillaise hymn :—

“ Contre nous de la tyrannie.
Le couteau sanglant est levé.”

After spending the few hours of life that remained in conversation, now and then enlivened by the sallies of the young and gay amongst them, they bade adieu to their fellow-prisoners, whose minds were so raised by the heroism which these patriots displayed that it was some time before they became sensible of their loss.

The dungeon which they inhabited was shown with profound veneration to every prisoner who afterwards arrived at this preparatory scene of murder. A superstitious respect was paid to the miserable mattress of Vergniaud, and those who neither felt the force of their patriotism nor shared in their love for their country, were taught to pronounce with religious awe the names of these martyrs of liberty.

Had these lamented patriots known all the foulness of the crimes which the conspirators were meditating against them, it would have been easy to have withdrawn themselves from their vengeance, as many of their proscribed colleagues did. Some, indeed, fell under the murderers' hands, but some have happily

Memoirs of the Reign of Robespierre

escaped—Lanjuinais, Isnard, Louvet and some others, appear again on the scene. Barbaroux and Buzot, I am told, are alive ; and Pétion, who but a few months before was hailed as the support of his country, may again deserve the appellation—but the rest are gone for ever ; and there is no one who has any taste for literature, or feeling for liberty, but will sigh at the remembrance of Rabaut, Guadet and Condorcet.



PORTRAIT OF ROBESPIERRE.
In his room in the rue Saint-Honoré.

IV

AT THE CONVENT DES ANGLAISES, RUE DE CHARENTON

DURING the spring preceding the fatal 31st of May (1793) when the deputies of the Gironde and Barère passed most of their evenings at our house, I had not concealed that I was employed in writing some letters which have since been published in England, in which I had drawn the portrait of the tyrant in those dark shades of colouring that belonged to his hideous nature ; and Barère, in whose power my life was placed, was now the lackey of Robespierre, and the great inquisitor of the English at Paris. He had now seared his conscience with crimes, and bathed his hands in the blood of the innocent. What still increased my danger was that Barère could not but recollect, with the consciousness of his present vileness in our eyes, the political sentiments which he had expressed in those hours of social confidence, when had he been told that he should become the accomplice of unrecorded horrors, he would have answered with the feelings of Hazael : “ Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing ? ”

He could not but recollect that on the 3rd of June,

1793, the day after the insurrection, he came to our house with looks disordered and haggard, with eyes filled with tears, and a mind that seemed bursting with indignant sorrow ; repeatedly declaring that since the national representation was violated, liberty was lost ; deploring the fate of the Gironde, above all of Vergniaud, and execrating the Jacobins, and the commune of Paris. A thousand times he wished that he could transport himself to the foot of his native mountains, the Pyrenees, bid adieu for ever to the polluted city of Paris, and wander for the rest of his life amidst that sublime scenery which he described with melancholy enthusiasm.

It was not a little dangerous to have heard such sentiments from the lips of one who afterwards said boastingly in the Convention : “ Il n’y a que les morts qui ne reviennent pas ” ; of one who became the leader of assassinations and who, mounting the tribune with the light step of gaiety, dressed up with point and epigram those atrocious edicts of the Committee to which his bleeding country answered with her groans. Barère also knew that there was no danger of my declaring these things at the revolutionary tribunal, since those who were tried were not permitted to speak ; and he had no longer any ties of acquaintance with us which might have restrained him from such conduct, since, very soon after the 31st of May, upon our refusing to receive some deputies of the Mountain



PÉTION DE VILLENEUVE, MAYOR OF PARIS.

By Guérin, 1792.

(Musée de Versailles.)

whom he asked leave to introduce to us, he abandoned us altogether.

In the meantime the English newspapers came regularly to the Committee of Public Safety, in which passages from my letters were frequently transcribed, and the work mentioned as mine ; and those papers were constantly translated into French for the members of the Committee. Two copies of the work had also reached Paris, and although one was at my request destroyed, the other might, by means of those domiciliary visits which were so often repeated, have been thrown into the hands of revolutionary commissaries.

Thus I passed the winter at Paris (1793-1794), with the knife of the guillotine suspended over me by a frail thread when a singular opportunity of escape presented itself, and I fled to Switzerland, with a heart almost broken by the crimes I had witnessed, and the calamities I had shared. I forsook those who were most dear to me on earth, with no other consolation than that I left them exposed only to the common danger of every individual in the country, and relieved from the cruel apprehensions they had felt on my account.

I proceeded on my journey haunted by the images of gendarmes, who I fancied were pursuing me, and with a sort of superstitious persuasion that it was impossible I should escape. I felt as if some magical spell would chain my feet at the frontier of France,

which seemed to me a boundary that was impassable. As I approached the frontier the agitation of my spirits increased, and when I reached Bourg-Libre (Saint-Louis), the last French post where commissaries were appointed to examine the passports and those who presented them, my heart sank within me, and I tried to resign myself to a fate which seemed to my disordered mind inevitable. But I found that I had disquieted myself in vain ; revolutionary government had relaxed its iron nerve at this distance from the seat of tyranny, and the commissaries on the frontiers, after having performed their office with the mildest urbanity, suffered us to proceed to Basel, which is only half a league farther.

Some tall stakes, driven into the earth at certain distances, mark the limits of France and Switzerland. We drove rapidly past them, and were then beyond the reach of revolutionary government, and the axe of the guillotine.

At Basel, now almost the only social speck on Europe's wide surface where men meet for any other purposes than those of mutual destruction, I was in safety. But I was an exile from my family—from the only friends I had left—my friends in England, to whom I had written immediately on my arrival, in the fulness of my heart, and with the fond persuasion that they had trembled for my safety and would rejoice in my deliverance, having (with few



ASSASSINATION OF MARAT BY CHARLOTTE CORDAY
(JULY 13TH, 1793)

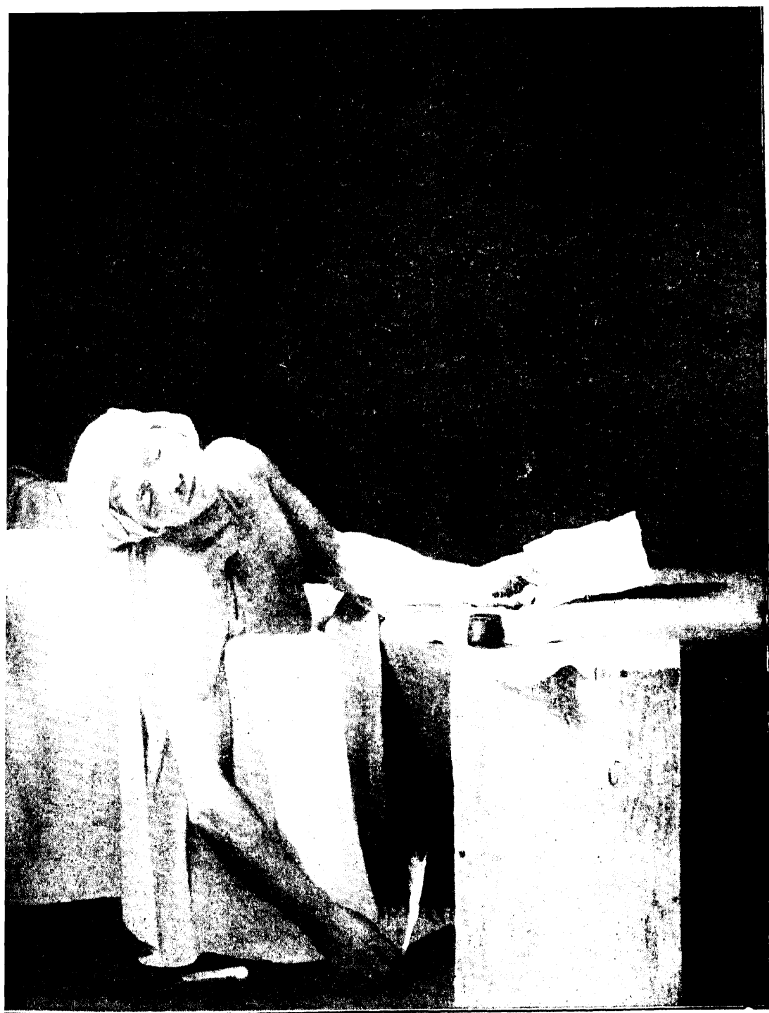
exceptions indeed !) returned no answers to my letters.

With what overwhelming sensations did I receive the tidings of the fall of Robespierre (July 27th, 1794), which was to change the colour of my life and give peace and consolation to so many millions of my fellow-creatures ! After waiting till the struggle maintained by the Jacobins against the national representation had happily ended, I returned to Paris. On entering again that polluted city, a thousand fatal recollections rushed upon my mind, a thousand local sensations overwhelmed my spirit. In driving along the rue Honoré, the appalling procession of the guillotine arose before my troubled imagination—I saw in the vehicles of death the spectres of my murdered friends. The magnificent square of the Revolution (Concorde), with all its gay buildings, appeared to me clotted with blood, and encumbered with the dead. Along the silent and deserted streets of the faubourg Germain, I saw inscribed in broad letters upon the gate of every hotel, “ propriété nationale,” while the orphans whose fathers and mothers have perished on the scaffold, and who live upon the alms of charity, pass in silence by the dwellings which are their rightful inheritance. The red flag waving above the portals of their forfeited mansions reminded me of an image of horror in Defoe’s history of the plague at London, where, he says, every house that was infected was marked with a bloody sign of the cross.

Yet at least we are no longer condemned to despair of finding justice on earth. Every day is signalized by such acts of retribution, that it seems as if heaven visibly descended to punish the guilty, while at the same time mercy and humanity are binding up the wounds of the afflicted, and setting the captive free. We seem to live in regions of romance. Louvet, Isnard, and others of our proscribed friends so long entombed in subterraneous dungeons, wandering over desert mountains, or concealed in the gloom of caverns unvisited by day, now restored to society and to their country, recount to us the secrets of their prison house, their "hairbreadth 'scapes," to which we listen with eager anxiety, and tremble at their past dangers.

But I must not thus anticipate.

Let me lead you to the Convent in the faubourg St. Antoine, to which we were transferred in order to make room at the Luxembourg for prisoners whom it was thought expedient to guard more strictly. We were taught by the administrators of police to consider our removal as a mark of particular indulgence towards us, since we should have the privilege of seeing our friends through the gate, and of walking occasionally in the garden of the Convent. Our countrymen were condemned to remain in the Luxembourg, at which they repined and remonstrated in vain. Wives were separated from their husbands, daughters from their



MARAT ASSASSINATED.

By Louis David.

(Musée de Versailles.)

fathers ; and as far the greater part of the English were in confined circumstances, and lived by their respective occupations, their resources being stopped by their imprisonment, the little store of assignats which they had saved from sequestration they were now forced to divide and, instead of sharing their frugal meal together, their expenses were doubled. Many were reduced to the most cruel difficulties, who had been accustomed to maintain their families respectably by their industry, and felt that the humiliation of receiving alms was no slight aggravation of the miseries of captivity.

That part of the Convent which the municipality had allotted for our prison consisting only of bare walls, we were each of us permitted to return to our respective houses, in order to provide ourselves with beds, and what furniture and clothes we thought proper. We were attended thither by an inspector of police and guards, together with one of the commissaries of our own section, who had put the seals on our apartments, and who on removing them examined our papers, consisting now only of a few poetical scraps which had escaped the flames. Odes, elegies and sonnets were instantly bundled up and sent to the municipality, notwithstanding my assurances that the muses to whom they were addressed, far from being accomplices in any conspiracy against liberty, had in all ages been its warmest auxiliaries.

With what melancholy sensations did we re-visit that home from which we were again to be torn in a few hours ! How often did my eyes wander over every object in our apartment ! The chairs and tables, which we found in the same position we had left them on our first imprisonment, seemed like mute friends whom it was anguish to leave, and whose well-known attitudes recalled the comforts of the past. With aching hearts we were once more led through the streets of Paris to our new prison. This Convent, called Les Anglaises, was still inhabited by twenty-three English nuns and, as it was their own property, had not shared the general fate of the monastic edifices. While the French monks and nuns had for more than a year before this period been driven from their retreats, the religious houses, both of men and women, which belonged to the English, had been respected, and their inhabitants left undisturbed. The English or rather Irish monks had, however, long since thrown off their habits, and conformed as well as they were able to the new system of opinions. But this was not the case with those religious sisters whose enthusiastic attachment to the external signs of their profession was greater, and their worldly wisdom less. The inhabitants of the faubourg St. Antoine, where they resided, accustomed from infancy to revere them, to have the wants of the poor supplied at the gate of the Convent, and, while under the former government



CHARLOTTE CORDAY.

By J. J. Hauer.

(Musée de Versailles.)

"When the case was ended, and the death sentence pronounced, she asked M. Hauer to come to the small room where she was to await execution. M. Hauer arrived. She thanked him for the interest he had taken in her fate, and offered to sit for him for the few minutes that remained to her. M. Hauer accepted."—(SOULÉE, *Notice du Musée de Versailles*, iii, 411.)

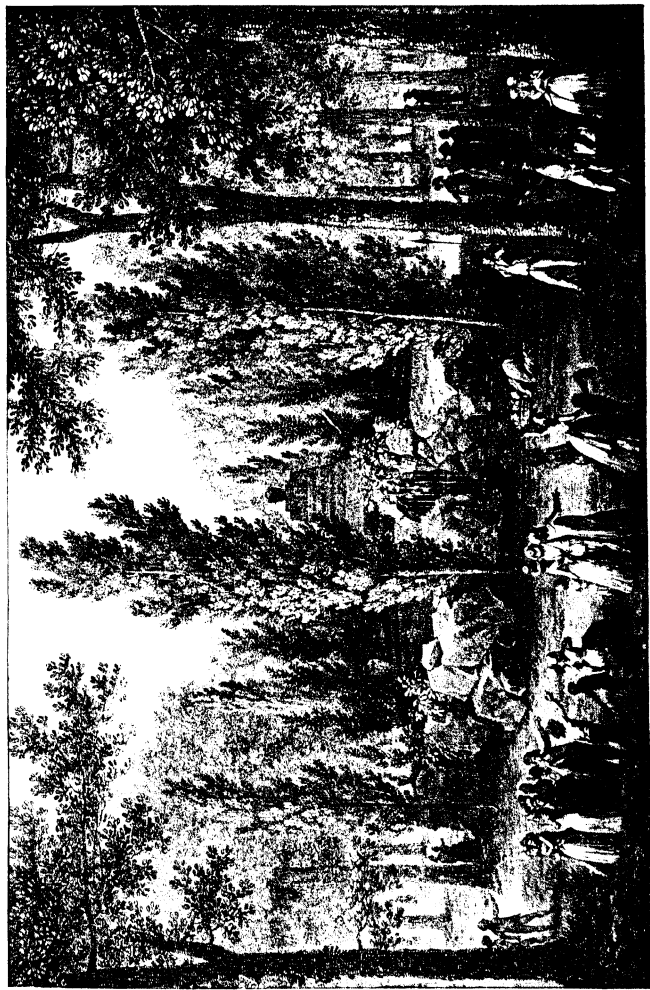
they were treated with neglect or disdain by others, to be there received with evangelical humility, felt that their esteem and veneration for the nuns had survived their own superstitious belief. The conquerors of the Bastille, the terror of aristocracy, and the vanguard of revolutions, laying aside their bloody pikes and bayonets, humbled themselves before those holy sisters whom a sort of visible sanctity seemed to encompass and whom they suffered, notwithstanding the general regulation, to wear the cherished symbols of their order, the veil and the cross, and seven times a day to ring the bell for prayers.

When we had passed the sentinels who guarded the Convent, the gate was unlocked for our admission by a nun in her habit. She embraced us with affectionate warmth and, addressing us in English, begged we would be comforted, since she and the other nuns who were to have the charge of us were our countrywomen and our sisters. This soothing sympathy, expressed in our native language, formed such a contrast to the rude accents of inspectors of police, that it seemed as if some pitying angel had leaned from heaven to comfort us. The kindness with which we were received by our amiable countrywomen contributed to reconcile us to our chamber, which might more properly be called a passage to other rooms, where the glowing tapestry of the Luxembourg was exchanged for plastered walls, and where we had

to suffer physical as well as moral evils, the weather being intensely cold and our wretched gallery having neither stove nor chimney. One circumstance tended to make our situation tolerable, which was that true spirit of fraternity that prevailed in our community, consisting of about forty female prisoners besides the nuns.

Into how happy a region would the world be transformed if that mutual forbearance and amity were to be found in it which had power to cheer even the gloom of a prison !

In addition to the tie of common calamity was the tie of a common country ; and in our present situation this bond of union appeared so strong that it seemed, as Dr. Johnson said of family relations, that we were born each other's friends. It was the general study of the whole community to prevent each other's wishes. There were no rich amongst us. The rich had made themselves wings, and vanished away before the promulgation of the law against the English. But those who still had any resources left shared all their little luxuries and indulgences with those who had none. The young succoured the old, the active served the infirm, and the gay cheered the dejected. There were indeed among us a few persons who, born of French parents, having passed their whole lives in France, and not speaking one word of our native language, seemed astonished to find by their imprison-



TOMB OF J. P. MARAT, IN THE CHAMPS-ÉLYSÉES.

The Tomb was the Work of the Sculptor, J. F. Martin.

Drawn by Filibaud.

ment that they were English women. They had no trace of recollection of that country which in evil hour chanced to give them birth, and did not easily reconcile themselves to the grated Convent, while their French sisters were enjoying perfect liberty.

When such of the former nobility who were our fellow-prisoners at the Luxembourg heard that we were going to be transferred to the faubourg St. Antoine, they gathered round us to express their fears for our safety in that frightful quarter of the city. I was persuaded, on the contrary, that we had much more to fear while shut up in this state prison with themselves, than in the faubourg St. Antoine, the inhabitants of which were chiefly composed of workmen and mechanics who in the course of the Revolution had acted too much in union to be led to perpetrate any partial mischief; since those immense numbers which had power to overthrow government could not be bribed to commit massacres.

The administrators of the police, when they ordered preparations to be made for our reception, announced us to the section as being all the wives and daughters of "milords anglais." This was no auspicious introduction. Accordingly our first care was to lay aside the honours and dignities conferred upon us by the officers of the police, and which certainly would not have been confirmed by the herald's office. The only distinction we now envied was that of belonging to the

privileged class who gained their bread by the labour of their hands, and who alone were exempted from the penalties of the law. We would thankfully have consented to purchase at the price of toil the sweets of liberty, when bereaved of which the sickening soul grows weary of existence. In vain we tried to twine the flowers of social pleasure around the bars of our prison, in vain we “took the viol and the harp, or endeavoured to rejoice at the sound of the organ.” That good which alone gives value to every other was wanting, and music was discordant, and conversation joyless.

Having repelled the calumnious report of our nobility, the revolutionary committee of our section under whose inspection we were placed, and who visited us in succession every day, began to look upon us with a more propitious eye, and lest our health should be impaired by confinement, they unlocked the garden gate, of the key of which, since our arrival, they had taken possession, to prevent any attempts to scale the walls, and permitted us to walk two hours every day accompanied by themselves. During these walks we found means to convince them that we had been guilty of no other offence against the state than that of being born in England; and the common principles of justice taught these unlettered patriots to lament the severity of our fate, which they endeavoured to soften by every mark of honest kindness.



MARIE ANTOINETTE IN THE PRISON DU TEMPLE.

By Kucharski.

(Musée de Versailles.)

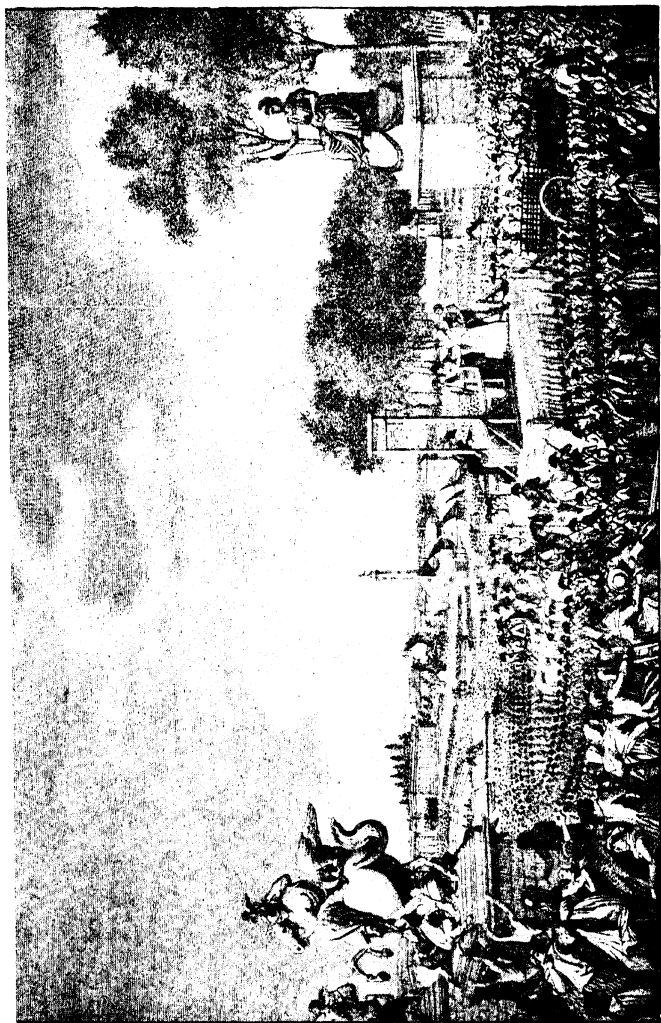
The visits of the administration of police were far less agreeable than those of our good commissaries. The first time they came, Brutus, one of their secretaries, fired with uncontrollable rage at the sight of the nun who unlocked the gate for his admission, rudely seized her veil, which he was with difficulty prevented from tearing off her face. This ferocious pagan threw down the cross which was erected in the garden, and trampled it under foot ; and having poured forth a volley of imprecations against the great bell, which still hung at the steeple instead of being transformed into a cannon, he left the dismayed nuns trembling with horror, and hastened to denounce the veils, the crosses, and the great bell at the municipality. The next morning Pache, the mayor of Paris, sent orders for the bell to be taken down, the crosses to be removed, and the nuns to throw off their habits immediately. Nothing could exceed their despair upon receiving this municipal mandate. The Convent resounded with lamentations, and the veils which were now to be cast off were bathed with tears.

There was, however, little time to be allowed to the indulgence of unavailing sorrow. Brutus might return, and it was necessary to proceed to action. Accordingly, a council of Caps was called in the room of the Superior, and after a deliberation, sometimes interrupted by sighs and sometimes by pleasantry, we all went to work, and in a few hours sweeping trains were

converted into gowns, and flowing veils into bonnets. One charming young nun, who was a pensive enthusiast, begged that, if it were possible, her bonnet might shroud her face altogether, while another, whose regards were not entirely turned away from this world, hinted that she should have no objection to the decoration of a bow.

My chief consolation during my confinement arose from the society of Sister Theresa, that amiable nun who so much wished to hide a face which nature had formed to excite love and admiration. It was impossible to converse with her without feeling that the Revolution was a blessing, if it was only for having prohibited vows which robbed society of those who were formed to be its delight and ornament. I have never met with a human creature who seemed to approach nearer to the ideas we form of angelic purity, who possessed a more correct spirit, or a more tender heart.

We were allowed the melancholy indulgence of seeing our friends through an iron grate, and there were still among the French some persons whose courageous friendship, undismayed by all the frowns of power, and the increasing terrors of revolutionary measures, did not abandon us in our prison. The greater part of the English who were yet in France, having been established in that country for years, had acquired some friends, who lamented their



EXECUTION OF MARIE ANTOINETTE (NOON, OCTOBER 16TH, 1793.)

The Queen was requested to turn her back to the Statue of Liberty, as though she were unworthy of regarding it.

Drawn by C. Motucl.

At the Convent des Anglaises, Rue de Charenton

misfortunes and who risked their own personal safety by making unwearied efforts for their deliverance. The dress of our visitors was indeed not a little grotesque, the period being now arrived when the visible signs of patriotism were dirty linen, pantaloons, uncombed hair, red caps or black wigs, and all, as Rosalind says, “denoting a careless disorder.”

The obsolete term of *muscadin*, which means a scented fop, was revived ; and every man who had the boldness to appear in a clean shirt was branded with that appellation, and every woman who wore a hat was a *muscadine* ; for the period was still remembered when a round cap was the badge of roture, nor were the aristocratical pretensions of the hat yet buried in oblivion. It is remarkable enough that at this period Robespierre always appeared not only dressed with neatness, but with some degree of elegance, and while he called himself the leader of the *sans-culottes*, never adopted the costume of his band. His hideous countenance, far from being involved in a black wig, was decorated with hair carefully arranged and nicely powdered ; while he endeavoured to hide those emotions of his inhuman soul which his eyes might sometimes have betrayed, beneath a large pair of green spectacles, though he had no defect in his sight.

At this period (November 9th, 1793) one of the most accomplished women that France has produced

perished on the scaffold. This lady was Madame Roland, the wife of the late minister. On the 31st of May he had fled from his prosecutors, and his wife, who remained, was carried to prison. The wits observed on this occasion that the body of Roland was missing, but that he had left his soul behind. Madame Roland was indeed possessed of the most distinguished talents, and a mind highly cultivated by the study of literature. I had been acquainted with her since I first came to France, and had always observed in her conversation the most ardent attachment to liberty, and the most enlarged sentiments of philanthropy, sentiments which she developed with an eloquence peculiar to herself, with a flow and power of expression which gave new graces and new energy to the French language. With these extraordinary endowments of mind she united all the warmth of a feeling heart and all the charms of the most elegant manners. She was tall and well shaped ; her air was dignified, and although more than thirty-five years of age she was still handsome. Her countenance had an expression of uncommon sweetness, and her full dark eyes beamed with the brightest rays of intelligence. I visited her in the prison of St. Pelagie, where her soul, superior to circumstances, retained its accustomed serenity, and she conversed with the same animated cheerfulness in her little cell, as she used to do in the hotel of the minister. She



THE PLACE DE LA CONCORDE WITH THE STATUE OF LIBERTY, IN FRONT OF WHICH THE GUILLOTINE
WAS ERECTED.

Water-colour by J. Spence.

(Musée de Versailles.)

had provided herself with a few books, and I found her reading Plutarch. She told me she expected to die, and the look of placid resignation with which she spoke of it, convinced me that she was prepared to meet death with a firmness worthy of her exalted character. When I enquired after her daughter, an only child of thirteen years of age, she burst into tears ; and at the overwhelming recollection of her husband and her child, the courage of the victim of liberty was lost in the feelings of the wife and mother.

Immediately after the murder of the Gironde deputies she was sent to the Conciergerie like them to undergo the mockery of a trial, and like them to perish. When brought before the revolutionary tribunal she preserved the most heroic firmness, though she was treated with such barbarity, and insulted by questions so injurious to her honour, that sometimes the tears of indignation started from her eyes. This celebrated woman, who at the bar of the National Convention had, by the commanding graces of her eloquence, forced even from her enemies the tribute of applause and admiration, was now in the hands of vulgar wretches, by whom her fine talents, far from being appreciated, were not even understood.

With keen regret I must admit that some papers in her justification which she sent me from her prison, perhaps with a view that at some happier period, when the voice of innocence might be heard, I should make

them public, I was compelled to destroy, the night on which I was myself arrested ; since, had they been found in my possession, they would inevitably have involved me in her fate. Before I took this resolution, which cost me a cruel effort, I employed every means in my power to preserve these precious memorials. In vain ; for I could find no person who would venture to keep them amidst the terror of domiciliary visits, and the certainty, if they were found, of being put to death as an accomplice of the writer. But her fair fame stands in no need of such testimonials ; her memory is embalmed in the minds of the wise and good, as one of those glorious martyrs who have sealed with their blood the liberties of their country. After hearing her sentence she said, “ You think me worthy, then, of sharing the fate of those great men whom you have assassinated. I will endeavour to go to the scaffold with the courage which they displayed.”

On the day of her trial she dressed herself in white ; her long dark hair flowed loosely to her waist, and her figure would have softened any hearts less ferocious than those of her judges. On her way to the scaffold she was not only composed, but sometimes assumed an air of gaiety, in order to encourage a person who was condemned to die at the same time, but who was not armed with the same fortitude.

When more than one person is led at the same time to execution, since they can suffer only in succession,

COMMUNE DE PARIS.



L'an second de la

République Française,

ORDER TO RELEASE H. M. WILLIAMS AND HER SISTER CECILIA FROM THE
LUXEMBOURG PRISON AND TO TRANSFER THEM TO THE CONVENT DES
ANGLAISES, AT CHARENTON, 5 BRUMAIRE, YEAR II (OCTOBER 26TH, 1793).

those who are reserved to the last are condemned to feel multiplied deaths at the sound of the falling instrument, and the sight of the bloody scaffold. To be the first victim was therefore considered as a privilege, and had been allowed to Madame Roland, as a woman. But when she observed the dismay of her companion, she said to him, "Go first! Let me at least spare you the pain of seeing my blood shed." She then turned to the executioner and begged that this sad indulgence might be granted to her fellow sufferer. The executioner told her that he had received orders that she should perish first. "But you cannot, I am sure," said she with a smile, "refuse the last request of a lady."

The executioner complied with her demand. When she mounted the scaffold, and was tied to the fatal plank, she lifted up her eyes to the statue of liberty, near which the guillotine was placed, and exclaimed, "Oh, Liberty! how men have made sport of thee!"

The next moment she perished. But her name will be recorded in the annals of history as one of those illustrious women whose superior attainments seem fitted to exalt her sex in the scale of being.

She had predicted that her husband would not survive her loss, and her prediction was fulfilled. Roland, who had concealed himself till this period, no sooner heard the fate of his wife, whose influence over his mind had often been a subject of reproach

among his enemies, than, feeling that life was no longer worth possessing, he put an end to his existence. His body was found in a wood near the high-road between Paris and Rouen. The papers which were in his pocket-book were sent to the Committee of General Safety, and have never seen the light. His unhappy daughter found an asylum with an old friend of her proscribed parents, who had the courage to receive her at a period when it was imminently dangerous to afford her protection. But the time probably now draws near when this child will be adopted by her country, and an honourable provision will be made for her, as a testimony of natural gratitude towards those who gave her birth.

Amidst the extraordinary changes which were passing in France, the Convention now changed time itself, and decreed the new calendar (decree of 5th October, 1793). A report was made on it, so philosophical and so pleasing to the imagination that, amidst the sanguinary measures of those days, it seemed to the oppressed heart what a solitary spot of fresh verdure appears to the eye amidst the cragginess of lowering rocks or the gloom of savage deserts.

Love of change is natural to sorrow, and for my own part I felt myself so little obliged to the months of my former acquaintance, which as they passed over my head had generally brought successive evils in

their train, or served as the anniversaries of some melancholy epoch, that I was not much displeased to part with them for months with appellations that bring to the mind images of nature, which in every aspect has some power of giving pleasure, from Nivôse, the month of snows, to Floréal, the month of flowers. I therefore soon learnt to count the days of my captivity by the new calendar, which was highly necessary, since, if a reclamation for liberty had been dated on Monday instead of *Primidi*, or on Tuesday to the neglect of *Duodi*, the police would not only have passed to the order of the day, but declared the writer *suspect*.

After two months' imprisonment we obtained our liberty, in consequence of the unwearied efforts which were made for that purpose by a young Frenchman whom my sister has since married, Athanase Coquerel. He was at Rouen in Normandy when the decree against the English arrived, and a few hours after saw a long procession of coaches pass through the streets filled with English prisoners who, just torn from their families and their homes, were weeping bitterly. Deeply affected by this spectacle, he flew to Paris with the resolution of obtaining our liberty or of sharing our prison. He haunted the municipality every night, attended the levees of administrators of police every morning, risked his own personal safety a thousand times, and at length, like a true knight,

vanquished all obstacles and snatched his mistress from captivity.

I could not help lamenting that he was compelled to make application for our release to Chaumette, the procureur of the commune, who had been the principal evidence against the deputies of the Gironde. Nothing could be more cruel than this kind of humiliation :

“ Prostrate our friends’ dire murderer to implore,
And kiss those hands yet reeking with their gore.”

With what delicious emotions did we return to our own habitation ! After passing two months in prison at such a period, we felt the blessedness of home in its full extent. To range through our own apartments without being pursued by guards or jailers : to return to domestic comforts and domestic peace, excited sensations the most delightful. Society had indeed vanished, and home was but a milder prison, where we lived in voluntary seclusion, trembling at every knock at the gate, lest it should bring the mandate of a new arrestation ; and afraid to venture out lest we should be found guilty of an English physiognomy by some of the numerous spies of the police who were continually prowling through the streets of Paris. These, indeed, were the only persons we had to fear ; for even at the very moment when the permanent order of the day at the Jacobins was the crimes of the English, far from receiving the smallest insult from the people of Paris, they displayed the utmost sympathy



BARÈRE, BY LOUIS DAVID (1790).

(Musée de Versailles.)

At the Convent des Anglaises, Rue de Charenton

for our situation, and our release from prison seemed to diffuse general satisfaction through the whole neighbourhood.

The prisons became more and more crowded, and increasing numbers were every day dragged to the scaffold. *Suspect* was the warrant of imprisonment, and *conspiracy* was the watchword of murder. One person was sent to prison because aristocracy was written on his countenance ; another because it was said to be written in his heart. Many were deprived of liberty because they were rich ; others, because they were learned ; and most who were arrested enquired the reasons in vain.

V

THE CRIMES OF ROBESPIERRE

A FEW weeks after our release from prison, Rabaut Saint-Etienne was put to death (December 5th, 1793). He was one of the most enlightened and virtuous men whom the Revolution had called forth, and had acquired general esteem by his conduct as a legislator, and considerable reputation by his talents as a writer. He was the President of the famous committee of twelve which was appointed by the Convention, previously to the 31st of May, to examine into the conspiracies which threatened its existence, and which, as I have already related, hastened its partial dissolution. Rabaut, as often as he presented himself to make the report, was compelled, by the interruptions of the conspirators and their agents, to retire from the tribune, until that moment arrived when he, together with the members of the Commission and the deputies of the Gironde, were expelled or rather torn from the Convention ! I saw him on this memorable day (for he took shelter for a few hours at our house) filled with despair, not so much for the loss of his own life, which he then considered as inevitable, as for that of the liberty of his country, now falling under the vilest

The Crimes of Robespierre

despotism. He escaped arrest on the 2nd of June, from not having been present at the Convention when the conspirators consummated their crime by means of the military force of Paris, and concealed himself in the house of a friend (called Payssac) with his brother (Rabaut Pomier), one of the seventy-three deputies who had signed the protest.

They enclosed part of a room for their place of shelter, and built up the wall with their own hands, placing a bookcase before the entrance so that there was not the least appearance of concealment. They employed a carpenter, in whom they had great confidence, to make the door, and the wretch betrayed them. Rabaut Saint-Etienne was immediately brought before the revolutionary tribunal to have his person identified, for he was now outlawed, which in France is the sentence of death. He was led to execution ; and his wife, a most amiable woman, unable to support the loss of a husband whom she tenderly loved, put an end to her existence.

His brother was taken to the Conciergerie, where he languished with three other victims, for many months, in a subterranean dungeon ; and there being only one bed allotted for four persons, he lay upon the damp floor, and contracted such violent disorders that his life was long despaired of. He has now taken his seat in the Convention. The generous friend and his wife, who had given the brothers an asylum, were

also dragged to prison, and some time after were condemned, for this noble act of friendship, to perish on the scaffold (June 25th, 1794).

France, during the unrelenting tyranny of Robespierre, exhibited unexampled crimes. It was also the scene of extraordinary virtue, of the most affecting instances of magnanimity and kindness. Of this nature was the conduct of a young man who, being a prisoner with his brother, happened to be present when the names of the victims were called over who were summoned to appear the next day before the sanguinary tribunal. The young man found the name of his brother, who at that moment was absent, on the fatal list. He paused only an instant to reflect, that the life of the father of a large family was of more value than his own; he answered the call, surrendered himself to the officer, and was executed in his brother's stead. A father made the same sacrifice for his son; for the tribunal was so negligent of forms that it was not difficult to deceive its vigilance.

The increasing horrors which every day produced had at length the effect of extinguishing in every heart the love of life, that sentiment which clings so fast to our nature. To die, and to get beyond the reach of oppression, appeared a privilege. And perhaps nothing appalled the souls of the tyrants so much as that serenity with which their victims went

COMMUNE DE PARIS.

L'an second de la



République Française

une et indivisible.

ORDER TO RELEASE HELEN WILLIAMS (MOTHER OF HELEN MARIA) AND P. WILLIAMS (HER SISTER) AND JANE BARTON, THEIR SERVANT, FROM THE LUXEMBOURG PRISON, AND TO TRANSFER THEM TO THE CONVENT DES ANGLAISES, AT CHARENTON, 5 BRUMAIRE, YEAR II (OCTOBER 26TH, 1793).

(Archives of the Prefecture of Police.)

The Crimes of Robespierre

to execution. Among these, the women have been particularly distinguished for their admirable firmness in death. Perhaps this arose from the superior sensibility which belongs to the female mind, and which made it feel that it was less terrible to die than to survive the objects of its tenderness. When the general who commanded at Longwy, on its surrender to the Prussians, was condemned to die, his wife, a beautiful young woman of four and twenty years of age, who heard the sentence pronounced, cried out in a tone of despair, "Vive le roi !" The inhuman tribunal, instead of attributing her conduct to distraction, condemned her to die. Her husband, when he was placed in the cart, was filled with astonishment and anguish when he saw his beloved wife led towards it. The people, shocked at the spectacle, followed her to the scaffold, crying, "She did not deserve death." "My friends," said she, "it is my own fault ; I was resolved to perish with my husband."

The fury of these implacable monsters seemed directed with peculiar virulence against that sex whose weakness man was destined by nature to support. The scaffold was every day bathed with the blood of women. Some who had been condemned to die but had been respited on account of their pregnancy, were dragged to death immediately after their delivery, in that state of weakness which savages would have respected.

Fourteen young girls of Verdun, who had danced at a ball given by the Prussians, were led to the scaffold together, and looked like nymphs adorned for a festival. Sometimes whole generations were swept away at one moment, and the tribunal exhibited many a family-piece which has almost broken the heart of humanity. Malesherbes, the counsel of Louis XVI, was condemned to die at eighty years of age, with his daughter and son-in-law, his granddaughter and grandson.

His daughter seemed to have lost sight of every earthly object but her venerable parent. She embraced him a thousand times on the way to execution, bathed his face with her tears, and when the minister of death dragged her from him, forgetting that the next moment put an end to her own life, she exclaimed, "Wretch ! are you going to murder my father ?"

A young lady, the former Marchioness Dubois de Béranger, was imprisoned in the Luxembourg with her whole family. When her father, mother, and younger sister received their act of accusation, and she found herself alone exempted, she shed a flood of tears, her heart was overwhelmed with anguish.

"You will die without me," she cried. "I am condemned to survive you ; we shall not perish together !" While she abandoned herself to despair, her act of accusation arrived. A ray of transport was instantly diffused over her countenance. She flew

The Crimes of Robespierre

into the arms of her parents, and embraced them. "My dear mother," she exclaimed, "we shall die together."

When the family was transferred to the Conciergerie, she never left her mother a moment, but watched over her with unwearied tenderness, and while she tried to soothe her sufferings by filial endearments, she endeavoured to inspire her with courage by the example of her own heroic fortitude.

Mademoiselle de Maleissye, her younger sister, when condemned to die, said to her father with naïveté, "I will cling so fast to you, my dear father, you who are so good, that God will suffer me to pass in spite of my transgressions."

In the prison of la Force, the men were allowed to breathe the air in a courtyard separated by a wall from the habitation of the women. A common sewer was the only means of communication. At that spot an unhappy son presented himself every morning and every night, to enquire after his mother, who was condemned to die, but reprieved because she was pregnant, and after her delivery executed. That pious child, in his early age already the victim of misfortune, knelt down before the infectious sewer, and with his mouth placed upon the hole poured forth the feelings of his filial tenderness. His younger brother, a lovely child of three years of age, who was suffered to remain with his mother till her last

moments, was often placed at the opposite end of the sewer and answered for his mother when she was too ill to undertake that task herself. A person of my acquaintance heard him say, "Mamma has not cried so much to-night. She has slept a little, and wishes you good morning. It is Lolo, who loves you very much, who is speaking to you."

At length this unfortunate mother, when going to execution, transmitted to her son, by the sewer, her long and graceful tresses, as the only inheritance she had to give. She then bade her infant a last farewell, and was led to the scaffold, where her husband had perished some months before.

On some occasions the genuine feelings of nature burst forth amidst the stupefied terror that had frozen every heart. A law had lately passed, obliging every merchant to inscribe on his door the stock of merchandise in his warehouse, under the penalty of death. A wine merchant, whose affairs had called him hastily into the country, entrusted the business of the inscription to his son, who from ignorance or negligence, for it was clearly proved that there existed no intention of fraud, had omitted to affix the declaration in the precise words of the law. The conscientious jury of the revolutionary tribunal condemned him to death, presuming on the counter-revolutionary intention in this case from the act, though they were in general accustomed, for want of other evidence, to find the



The Crimes of Robespierre

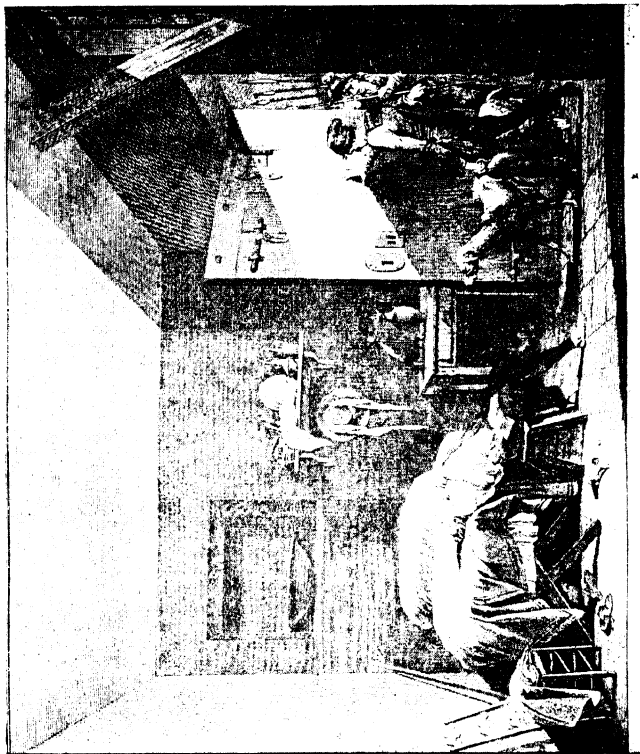
act by guessing at the intention. The innocent prisoner had prepared himself for death, when the minister of justice, informed of the case, wrote to the Convention demanding a respite. His letter had not been half read before the hall resounded with the cry of "Reprieve ! Reprieve !" and fearing that the act of pardon would arrive too late, the Convention, dispensing with the usual formalities, not only sent its officers and part of the military force, but great numbers of the deputies rushed out to stop the execution.

The officer who received the order first, with which he flew towards the place of the Revolution (from the Tuileries to the place de la Concorde), told me that on his coming out of the Convention he saw the scaffold reared and the crowd assembled. He had scarcely reached the first tree of the vista when he saw the fatal knife descend. He redoubled his speed, but before he got to the end of the walk another head had fallen. A third person had mounted the scaffold, but the voice of the messenger was too weak, from the efforts he had made to reach the spot, to be noticed by the multitude. The fourth had ascended when he gained the place, rushed through the crowd, called to the executioner and leaped on the scaffold. The prisoner had been stripped, his shoulders were bare, and he was already tied to the plank when the cry of "Reprieve !" burst forth.

The officer enquired his name, which the young man told him. "Alas ! you are not the person," he replied. The prisoner submitted calmly to his fate.

The bearer of the reprieve, who is a person of a very benevolent disposition, declared that he never felt so acute a pang as when he was compelled to turn away from this unfortunate victim. He hastened, however, to the prison, where he found the person who was reprieved awaiting the return of the cart and the executioner, his hair cut and his hands tied, to be led to death at another part of the city where his house stood. A wife and nine children were deploring the miserable loss of a husband and father, when the officer who had brought the tidings of life to the prisoner, went at his request to carry them to his distracted family. I need not describe what he related to me of the scene—your heart will readily fill up the picture.

That class of men who were peculiarly the object of the tyrant's rage were men of letters, with respect to whom the jealousy of the rival mingled with the fury of the oppressor, and against whom his hatred was less implacable for having opposed his tyranny than for having eclipsed his eloquence. It is a curious consideration that the unexampled crimes of this sanguinary usurper, and the consequent miseries which have desolated the finest country of Europe, may perhaps, if traced to their source, be found to



CONDORCET COMMITS SUICIDE IN PRISON, MARCH 28TH, 1794.

Historical Pictures of the Revolution, No. 97.

The Crimes of Robespierre

arise from the resentment of a disappointed wit. Robespierre, for the misfortune of humanity, was persecuted by the most restless desire of distinguishing himself as an orator, and nature had denied him the power.

He and his brother were born at Arras, and left orphans at an early age. The Bishop of Arras had bestowed on them the advantages of a liberal education. Robespierre distinguished himself by his application to his first studies, and obtained many literary prizes.

At the age of sixteen, elated by the applause he had received, he fancied himself endowed with such rare powers of genius as would enable him to act a splendid part on the theatre of the world, and his friends indulged the same fond expectation. He applied to the study of the law, and already in imagination contemplated himself disputing with the first orators of the age the palm of eloquence. Experience, however, convinced his friends, and at length himself, that they had indulged a vain illusion. He discovered no taste or aptitude for the profession for which he was designed, became weary of study, was checked by the slightest difficulties; and being found destitute of those talents which were necessary to his success as a public speaker, his benefactor, after a trial of sufficient length, refused to support him any longer at a considerable and fruitless expense at Paris, but ordered him to return to Arras, where in an humble sphere,

better suited to the mediocrity of his abilities, he might pursue his profession as a lawyer. Robespierre was compelled to return to Arras.

After the splendid dreams he had indulged of fame and honours in the capital, this was a humiliation he felt keenly, but which he brooded over in silence ; for he never on any occasion displayed his sensibility to mortifications, which was in proportion to his excessive vanity, but concentrated within his vindictive soul his disgrace, his resentment, and his projects of vengeance.

From the period of his return to Arras may be dated his abhorrence of men of talents. From that moment, instead of admiring genius, he repined at its existence. The same feelings clung to his base and envious spirit when he had usurped his dictatorial power. He made it pain of death to be the author of what he called seditious publications ; by which means it was easy for him to involve men of letters in a general proscription.

He suppressed every dramatic piece in which there were any allusions he disliked, or wherein the picture of history held up to view any feature of his own character. It was his plan to abolish theatrical entertainments altogether, for he considered the applause bestowed on fine poetry as something of which his harangues were defrauded. He held up men of letters to the people as persons hostile to the cause of liberty



The Crimes of Robespierre

and incapable of raising themselves to the height of the revolution.

Bailly, the first mayor of Paris, whose astronomical researches have placed him in the highest ranks of science, was murdered with circumstances of peculiar aggravation. He was to have been executed in the Champ de Mars, but from the caprice of the sanguinary mob, he was compelled to wait two or three hours at the place of execution, while the scaffold was removed to a field adjoining, where he stood drenched in rain, in the midst of winter, and, which was more difficult to bear than the "pelting of the pitiless storm," exposed to the insults and injuries of an execrable set of wretches who usually attended these horrid spectacles.

The red flag was burned before his eyes, and he was compelled to set fire to the pile that consumed it, while the ruffians plunged his head into the smoke for their amusement.

He submitted to all that was inflicted on him with the serenity of a philosopher, and only requested with mildness that his sufferings might be terminated. One of the barbarians by whom he was tormented, said to him in a tone of savage mockery, "You're trembling, Bailly!" "It is with cold, my friend." At length, after having made him drink the cup of bitterness to the very dregs, they permitted him to die (November 10th, 1793).

You will perhaps think that the sketch which I have

given you of public and private calamities is sufficiently gloomy. But, alas, the scene blackens as we advance, and wears a deeper horror. We have now arrived at that period when the tyrant, grown bolder by success, intoxicated with power, and throwing aside all regard even to forms, reached the climax of his crime and accelerated the moment of his fall. You will view him and the agents of his iniquity no longer satisfied with victims in detail. They now murder in *mass*, and in the words of Racine :

“ Laver dans le sang leur bras ensanglantés.”

VI

OUR RETREAT AT MARLY

WHILE far along the moral horizon of France the tempest became every hour more black and turbulent, the spring, earlier and more profuse of graces than in the climate of England, arose in its unsullied freshness, and formed a contrast at which humanity sickened. The lovely environs of Paris are not like those of London, so encumbered with houses and buildings that you must travel ten or twelve miles from town to find the country ; but the moment you have passed the barriers of the city, present you with all the charming variety of vine-clad hills and fields and woods and lawns.

Immediately after our release from prison we quitted our apartments in the centre of the town (rue Helvétius, now rue Sainte-Anne) and tried to shelter ourselves from observation in an habitation situated on the most remote part of the faubourg Germain. From thence a few minutes' walk led us to the country. But we no longer dared, as we had done the preceding year, to forget awhile the horrors of our situation by wandering occasionally amidst the noble parks of St. Cloud, the wild woods of Meudon, or the elegant

gardens of Bellevue, all within an hour's ride of Paris.

Those seats, once the residence of fallen royalty, were now haunted by vulgar despots, by revolutionary commissaries, by spies of the police, and sometimes by the sanguinary decemvirs themselves. Often they held their festive orgies in those scenes of beauty, where they dared to cast their polluting glance on nature, and tread with profane steps her hallowed recesses.

Even the revolutionary juries used sometimes on a *decadi*, the only day of suspension from their work of death, to go to Marly or Versailles, steeped as they were to the very lips in blood. Without being haunted by the mangled spectres of those whom they had murdered the preceding day, they saw nature in her most benign aspect, pleading the cause of humanity and mercy, and returned to feast upon the groans of those whom they were to murder on the morrow.

Those regions of decorated beauty being now forbidden ground, we confined our walks to some pasturage lands near the town, which were interspersed with a few scattered hamlets and skirted by hills, and were so unfrequented that we heard no sounds except the sheep-bell and the nightingales, and saw no human figure but an old peasant with a white beard who together with a large black dog took care of the flock. It was in these walks that the soul, which the scenes



RABAUT SAINT-ETIENNE.

By Louis David.

(Chéramy Collection.)

Our Retreat at Marly

of Paris petrified with terror, melted at the view of the soothing landscape. I have no words to paint the strong feeling of reluctance with which I always returned from our walks to Paris, that den of carnage, that slaughter-house of man. How I envied the peasant his lonely hut ! for I had now almost lost the idea of social happiness. My disturbed imagination divided the communities of men into but two classes, the oppressor and the oppressed, and peace seemed only to exist with solitude.

On the 15th of Germinal (read 27th Germinal, April 16th, 1794) the Committee of Public Safety, or rather of public extermination, caused a law to be passed ordering all the former nobility and strangers to leave Paris within ten days, under the penalty of being put out of the law, which meant that if found in Paris after that period, they were to be led to the scaffold without a trial, as soon as their persons were identified.

This law, to which my family and myself were subject, was a part of the plan of general proscription that Robespierre had formed against nobles and foreigners, and which he was now impatient to put into force. We were ordered by the decree, after choosing the place of our retreat, to present ourselves at the revolutionary committee of our respective sections, who delivered to each of us not a passport, but what was called a pass, on which was written a

declaration that we left Paris in conformity to the law of the 15th of Germinal. Thus we were condemned to wander into the country with this pass, which was the mark of Cain upon our foreheads, and which under pain of imprisonment we were to deposit at the municipality where we bent our course ; and we were also condemned to present ourselves every twenty-four hours before the municipality, and inscribe our names on a list which was to be despatched every decade to the Committee of Public Safety.

And lest the country municipalities should mistake the intentions of the committee, and treat particular individuals with lenity upon their producing testimonies of their attachment to the cause of the revolution, these devoted victims were ordered by a decree to burn every certificate of civism of which they might happen to be in possession. We chose for the place of our retreat a little village half a mile distant from Marly, and with hearts overwhelmed with anguish, bade adieu to my sister who, being married to a Frenchman, was exempted from the law ; and we were once more driven from our home, not to return under the penalty of death. Our neighbours came weeping to our gate to take leave of us, and the poor, who were the only class which now dared to utter a complaint, murmured loudly at the injustice of the decree.

We were obliged to pass the square of the Revolution, where we saw the guillotine erected, the crowd

Our Retreat at Marly

assembled for the bloody tragedy, and the *gens d'armes* on horseback, followed by victims who were to be sacrificed, entering the square. Such was the daily spectacle which had succeeded the painted shows, the itinerant theatres, the mountebank, the dance, the song, the shifting scenes of harmless gaiety which used to attract the cheerful crowd as they passed from the Tuileries to the Champs Elysées.

When we reached the barrier we were stopped by a concourse of carriages filled with former nobles, and were obliged to wait till our passes were examined in our turn. The procession at the gate was singular and affecting. Most of the fugitives having, like ourselves, deferred their departure till the last day, and it being the forfeiture of our heads to be found in Paris the day following, the demand for carriages was so great and the price exacted by those who let them out, and who knew the urgency of the case, so exorbitant, that a coach or chariot was a luxury which fell only to the lot of a favoured few. The greater number were furnished with cabriolets, which seemed from their tottering condition somewhat emblematical of decayed nobility ; and many who found even these crazy vehicles too costly, journeyed in the carts which transported their furniture, seated upon the chairs they were conveying to their new abodes.

We reached our little dwelling at the hour of sunset. The hills were fringed with clouds, which still reflected

the fading colours of the day ; the woods were in deep shadow, a soft veil was thrown over nature, and objects indistinctly seen were decorated by imagination with those graces which were most congenial to the feelings of the moment. The air was full of delicious fragrance, and the stillness of the scene was only disturbed by sounds the most soothing in nature, the soft rustling of the leaves or the plaintive notes of the wood-pigeon.

The tears which the spectacle of the guillotine had petrified with horror, now flowed again with melancholy luxury. Our habitation was situated within a few paces of the noble park of Marly ; and the deserted alleys overgrown with long grass, the encumbering fragments of rock over which once fell the mimic cascades whose streams no longer murmur, the piles of marble which once formed the bed of crystal basins, the scattered machinery of the *jets d'eau* whose sources are dried, the fallen statues, the defaced symbols of feudality, the weeds springing between the stone steps of the ascent to the deserted palace, the cobwebbed windows of the gay pavilions—were all in unison with that pensiveness of mind which our present circumstances naturally excited. And here, where we could see nothing of Paris but the distant dome of the Panthéon, we should have been less unhappy if we had not too well known that the Committee of Public Safety had not sent nobles and foreigners into the



LOUISEROLLES ACCEPTS DEATH INSTEAD OF HIS SON,
JULY 26TH, 1794.

(Historical Pictures of the Revolution, No. 104.)

Our Retreat at Marly

country to enjoy the freshness of rural gales or the beauty of the opening spring, but as the first step towards a general proscription. And as we passed every evening through the park of Marly in order to appear before the municipality, that appalling idea “breathed a browner horror over the woods.” We were again rescued from the general danger by the two benevolent commissaries of the revolutionary committee of our section who, when they came to conduct us to prison, had treated us with so much gentleness, who had afterwards reclaimed us of the administration of police, and who now, unsolicited and even unasked, went to the Committee of Public Safety, declared they would answer for us with their lives, and caused us to be “put into requisition”; a form which enabled us to return to Paris and thus snatched us from the class of the suspected and proscribed. To their humanity we probably owe our existence, and I shall ever recollect with gratitude that noble courage which led them, amidst the cruel impulse of revolutionary government, the movement of which was accelerated as it went on, to pause and succour the unfortunate.

I have the satisfaction of adding that those commissaries are now (July–September, 1795) at liberty on account of their general good conduct, while scarcely any other members of revolutionary committees have escaped imprisonment.

VII

THE TYRANT

A SHORT time before our departure from Paris, the guillotine, upon which so many innocent victims had been sacrificed, for once streamed with the blood of the guilty.

One of the secrets of Robespierre's government was to employ, as the step-ladders of his ambition, men whose characters were marked with opprobrium or stained with crimes. Such men were best suited to his purpose, since they were not likely to pause in the execution of his orders, depending upon his favour, perhaps, for shelter from legal punishment ; and when they had fulfilled the part he allotted them, and he no longer stood in need of their agency, he had sufficient address to lead them to make some extravagant proposition which he denominated *ultra-revolutionary*, and for which he sent them to the scaffold, even with the approbation of the public.

Such was the sentiment excited by the execution of Hébert, who was commonly called Père du Chesne, on account of a daily paper he published bearing that title. In this paper he professed to tread in the steps of Marat, and indeed he proved himself worthy to be

The Tyrant

his lineal successor. He had the same insatiable thirst of blood ; he demanded with the same vehemence the heads of all conspirators, nobles, bankers, writers, and merchants, the faction of federalists and the faction of Pitt and Cobourg. Those mild demands were breathed in the language of the lowest vulgar ; every line was enforced by an oath, and every period rounded by an imprecation. Camille Desmoulins, after drawing the character of this journal, concluded by saying that it was written “ to form the delight of Coblentz and the only hope of Pitt.”

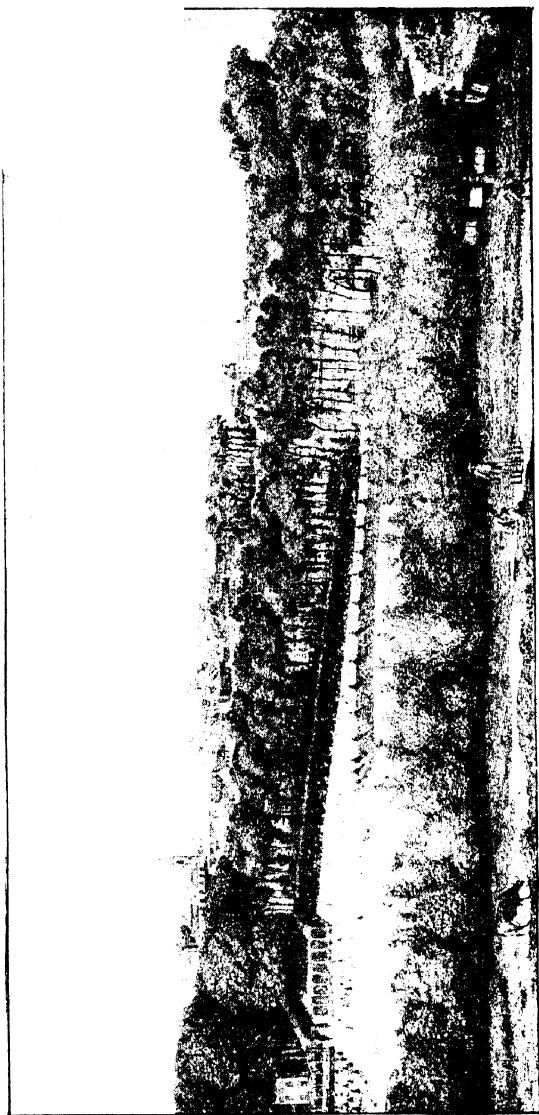
Such was Hébert who, having succeeded, with his colleagues of the municipality, in accomplishing what they called the revolution of May 31st (1793), felt with indignation that his revolutionary genius was forced to bend before the genius of Robespierre, and determined to immortalize the month of Ventose by a new revolution.

Hébert and company had hitherto met with such splendid success in insurrection, that they began to think it was no very difficult enterprise, now that the routine was known. It was but to ring the tocsin, beat the general, put the city under arms, take the direction of the military force, overthrow the Committee of Public Safety, and seize the reins of government. The ides of March, however, proved as fatal to the dominion of the red cap as they had heretofore done to that of the purple robe. In vain Hébert

mounted the tribune at the Cordeliers, asserted that tyranny existed, and caused a black veil to be thrown over the table of the Rights of Man; in vain the section of Marat declared itself in insurrection: the other sections of Paris were of the opinion that to go from the Committee of Public Safety to the municipality was flying from Scylla to Charybdis; and though all France groaned under the tyranny of the Committee, there was little hope that the wounds of the bleeding country would be healed by men who were the leaders of massacre and the preachers of the agrarian law. The Parisians therefore applauded the decree which sent Hébert and twenty of his coadjutors in revolutionary crimes to that sanguinary tribunal which, after a mockery of trial, ordered them to execution (March 24th, 1794) and “bade the cruel feel the pains they gave.”

The death of Hébert was the signal for throwing off the hideous masquerade of *sans culottism* in which all the world had been arrayed during the winter, in submissive deference to his interpretation of equality.

Immediately after his execution, the scene suddenly changed: black wigs, red caps, sailors' jackets and pantaloons were cast aside, and the eye was refreshed with the sight of combed locks, clean linen and decent apparel; while the women, who had for some months reluctantly bound up their hair beneath the round cap of the peasant, now unfolded their tresses, perfumed



MARY-LE-ROI (TAKEN FROM LOUYVECIENNES).

Drawn by Watteau. Engraved by Vauclat.

(Sardon Collection.)

The Tyrant

and powdered, to the vernal gales, and decorated in whatever manner they thought proper, provided the national cockade formed one of their ornaments.

The execution of Hébert and his colleagues was soon followed by that of a considerable number of the mountain deputies, among whom were Danton and Camille Desmoulins, names not unknown to fame in the annals of the revolution.

Danton had acted a distinguished part on the political theatre before Robespierre had been heard of, and Camille Desmoulins, on the day preceding the taking of the Bastille, had the glory of being the first man in France who placed the national cockade in his hat, and called upon his fellow-citizens to shake off the fetters of despotism.

Robespierre was not debarred from marking Danton and Camille Desmoulins as his victims, by the consideration that Danton had saved him at the moment when Louvet's representations of his crimes on the 2d of September had so strongly excited the indignation of the Convention that a decree of accusation was on the point of being hurled against him ; and that Camille Desmoulins had been his schoolfellow and his friend.

But the tyrant felt that Danton was " too near the throne," and Camille Desmoulins had awakened all his fury by an appeal which he made to the people, in a paper called the *Old Cordelier*, and which found

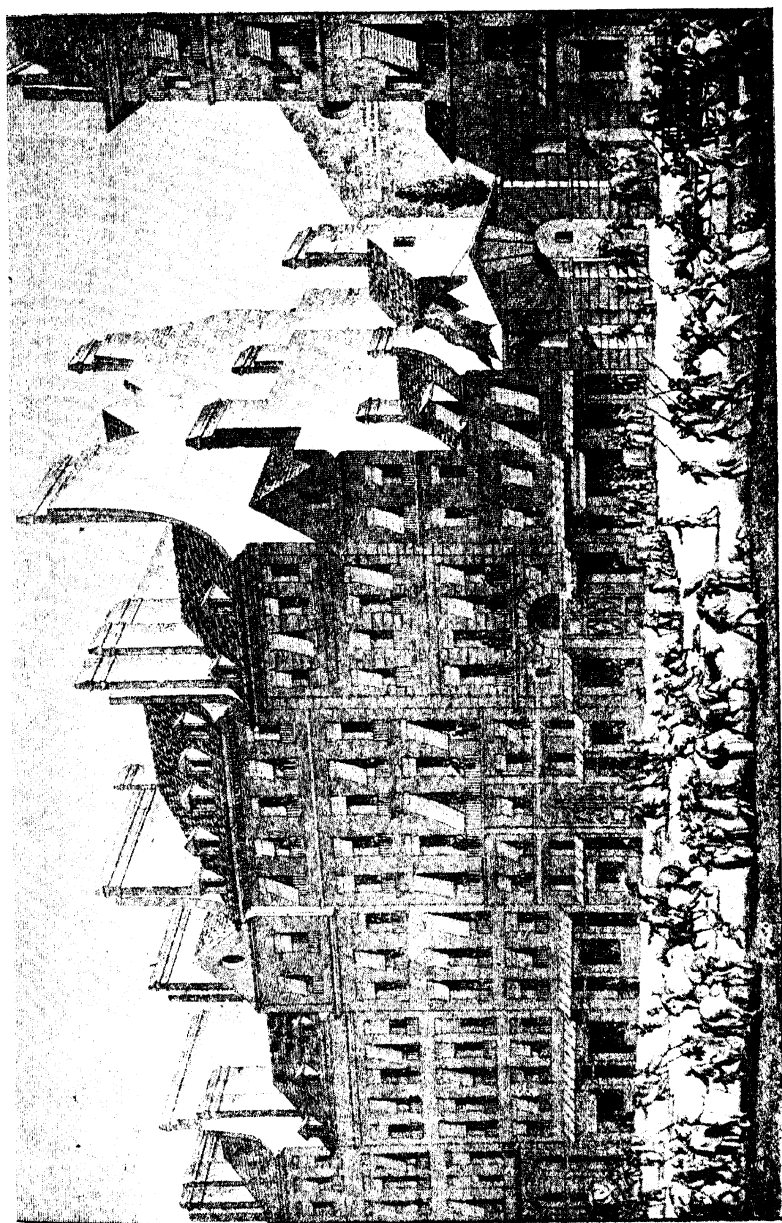
an echo in every heart. The excessive severity of the revolutionary law against the suspected had excited Desmoulins's indignation. "I die," said he, "for having shed one tear over the unhappy."

Danton, while at the Conciergerie, often conversed with the prisoners across the bars of his dungeon. He seemed ashamed of having been duped by Robespierre, with whom, by means of a common friend, he had an interview a few days before he was arrested, in order that they might come to an explanation.

Danton, after a long conversation, finding that he was unable to move the implacable Robespierre, who listened to him with a look of insulting malignity, shed some tears and left the room, saying, "I see that my fate is decided, but my death will be your ruin."

Camille Desmoulins and Danton, who had both possessed considerable powers of eloquence, defended themselves at the tribunal with so lofty a spirit, and treated their judges with so much disdain, that at length, irritated by their contempt and the sallies of their wit, and impatient at their perseverance in vindicating themselves when it was determined they should die, the public accuser sent a letter to the Convention, informing them that the prisoners were in a state of revolt against the tribunal.

The Committee of Public Safety caused a decree to be passed (April 4th, 1794) which put them out of the law, and sent instantly to execution all such of



The Tyrant

the accused as dared to insult their judges. In vain Danton called upon Barère, upon Billaud-Varennes, and upon other members of the Committee of Public Safety, to appear in evidence. Danton was left to his fate, and sent with his colleagues to execution. A proof of the horrible oppression under which we groaned was that we lamented the fate of Danton—Danton, the Minister of Justice on the 2nd of September and one of the murderers of liberty on the 31st of May.

A week after the death of Camille Desmoulins, his widow, a charming woman of 23 years of age, was led to the scaffold (April 13th, 1794). Her execution forms an epoch in the annals of the revolutionary government, since on that occasion, for the first time, a conspiracy supposed in a prison became the pretext for murder, and multitudes afterwards perished, the victims of that fatal invention. It was one of the singular chances of these revolutionary moments that Desmoulins, who with the pointed shafts of his wit had overthrown the idol of the populace, Hébert, perished himself but a fortnight later, and that his own wife and the wife of Hébert, seated on the same stone in the Conciergerie, deplored their mutual loss, and were led together to the scaffold.

The people, as Madame Desmoulins passed along the streets of execution, could not resist uttering exclamations of pity and admiration, “ How beautiful she is ! How mild she looks ! What a pity she should perish ! ”

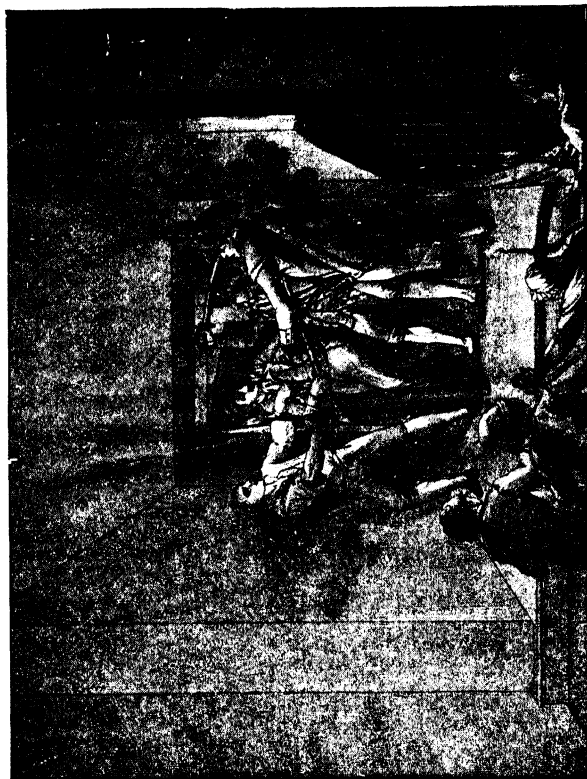
The resignation and courage with which the victims of this cruel tyranny in general resigned life were truly admirable. Many young persons, after receiving their act of accusation, composed verses written with a pencil at the table where they partook their last repast with their fellow-prisoners. The following, written by a young man of 24, Nicholas Roland de Montjournain, to his mistress, the night before his execution (February 4th, 1794), are simple and affecting :—

The hour that calls to death is near,
It brings to me no throb of fear ;
The breast that honour arms can brave
The murderer's steel, th' untimely grave.
But thou, to whom I gave my heart,
From thee for ever must I part
And leave my mourning love to sigh.
Ah ! 'tis a cruel task to die.

To-morrow, my closed eyes no more
Shall gaze on beauty I adore ;
To-morrow, saddening every grace,
Unceasing tears shall bathe thy face.
To-morrow, chilled by death's cold grasp,
This hand no longer thine shall clasp ;
From thee for ever I shall fly—
Ah ! 'tis a cruel task to die ! *

Early in the spring (May 10th, 1794) Madame Elizabeth was brought before the revolutionary tribunal. The only crime that could be imputed to her was that

The original French version contains five more verses, but the writer only translated the first two, given above.



ARREST OF HENRY ADMIRAL, 4, RUE FAVART.

(Admiral had tried to assassinate Collot d'Herbois.)

(*Musée Carnavalet.*)

The Tyrant

she was the sister of a king, and had shown that steadfast fidelity to her brother, which in generous minds, whatever might be their political opinions, would have excited sentiments of esteem and admiration. She had taken no part in those fatal schemes of crooked policy which, by seeking to seize once more that despotic power which the will of a mighty nation had torn from its grasp, lost that limited empire and that circumscribed dominion of which it might still have held possession. But whatever were the errors of Louis XVI, or the vices of Marie Antoinette, no blame was by any party imputed to the Princess Elizabeth. She had shared in neither the intrigues nor the licentiousness of the court. All that was known of her in prosperity were her virtuous manners and her charitable disposition ; and in adversity, her unshaken friendship for her brother, and her piety and resignation to God. She had suffered not only the most severe extremes of calamity, but all those indignities, wants and hardships which could give misfortune a keener edge ; for during the tyranny of Robespierre, the forms of decency which had till then been observed, were altogether disregarded. She, who had been used to the long train of attendants of the most splendid court of Europe, was compelled to perform the most menial offices herself, to dress her scanty meal and to sweep the floor of her prison. In such circumstances, with no ray of hope to cheer the

gloomy towers where she was immured, except the hope which was fixed on a better state of existence, she probably looked on death as her most soothing refuge, and therefore met it with tranquillity and firmness.

Madame Elizabeth betrayed some emotion at the sight of the guillotine, but she recovered herself immediately, and waited calmly at the foot of the scaffold till twenty-five persons who perished with her were put to death, her former rank being still sufficiently remembered to give her a title to pre-eminence in punishment.

Sometimes amidst these horrors the most ludicrous violations of the laws of nations took place ; and we might have smiled at the absurdities of our tyrants, if they had been mingled with less atrocity. The revolutionary committee of Certe, in the department of Hérault, with a noble defiance of all ordinary forms and observances, thought fit to put in requisition not only some mules belonging to the consul of a northern court, and a cart which was his property, but the consul himself to be their driver. The requisition was signed by William Tell, Brutus, Marat, Cato and Cæsar. Whether the consul was of the opinion that such great names were not to be trifled with, or whether he thought that driving mules was a safer occupation than contending with tigers, is uncertain ; but it is well known that he submitted himself with passive obedience to this *sans-culotte* edict till the 9th Ther-

The Tyrant

midor, after which period he sent to Paris to complain of the indignity he had suffered, and demanded the chastisement of William Tell and his colleagues.

It would require the pencil of a master to trace in all its dark colouring that picture of calamity and horror which Paris presented at this period. A deep and silent gloom pervaded the city, where heretofore every heart bounded with gaiety and every eye sparkled with delight. The citizens in general saw with stupefied terror those processions of death which daily encumbered the streets, and the feelings of sympathy and indignation were repelled by the sense of that personal danger from which no individual was secure. Even in his own habitation, and in the bosom of his family, no man dared to utter a complaint but in anxious whispers, lest a servant should overhear the forbidden expostulations of humanity, and denounce him as a counter-revolutionist. Many persons wearied of spectacles of horror put an end to their existence, and some who desired to die, but shrank from giving themselves the stroke of death, took measures to be sent before the revolutionary tribunal, where they knew assassins were ever ready. The usual means employed for this purpose was the cry of "*Vive le roi !*" words which many young women who had lost their parents or their lovers on the scaffold, repeated in the frenzy of despair, and found them, as they wished, a passport to the tomb.

Memoirs of the Reign of Robespierre

The beginning of the month of Prairial, a man of the name of Ladmiral formed the design of assassinating Robespierre and Collet d'Herbois ; he failed in the attempt (May 23rd, 1794), was seized and sent to the Conciergerie.

A few days after (*read* : the same day, May 23rd, 1794), Aimée-Cécile Renaud, a girl of nineteen years of age whose sensibility, it appears, was singularly affected by the scenes which were passing before her, and whose imagination perhaps was somewhat disordered by those terrible impressions, had the courage, while an armed nation bowed before its assassins, to enter alone and unarmed the monster's den, and, as it would seem, with the intention, at the expense of life, to point out to her countrymen the tyrant under whom they groaned. Cécile Renaud went one morning to Robespierre's house, and enquired if he was at home. She was answered in the negative, and being asked what she wanted, replied that she came to see what sort of thing was a tyrant. Upon this declaration she was instantly led to the Committee of General Safety, and went through a long examination. She again declared with the same simplicity that she had only gone because she wanted to see a tyrant ; and upon being searched, no offensive weapon was found upon her, and all that was contained in a little bundle that she held under her arm was a change of linen, with which she said she had provided herself, knowing

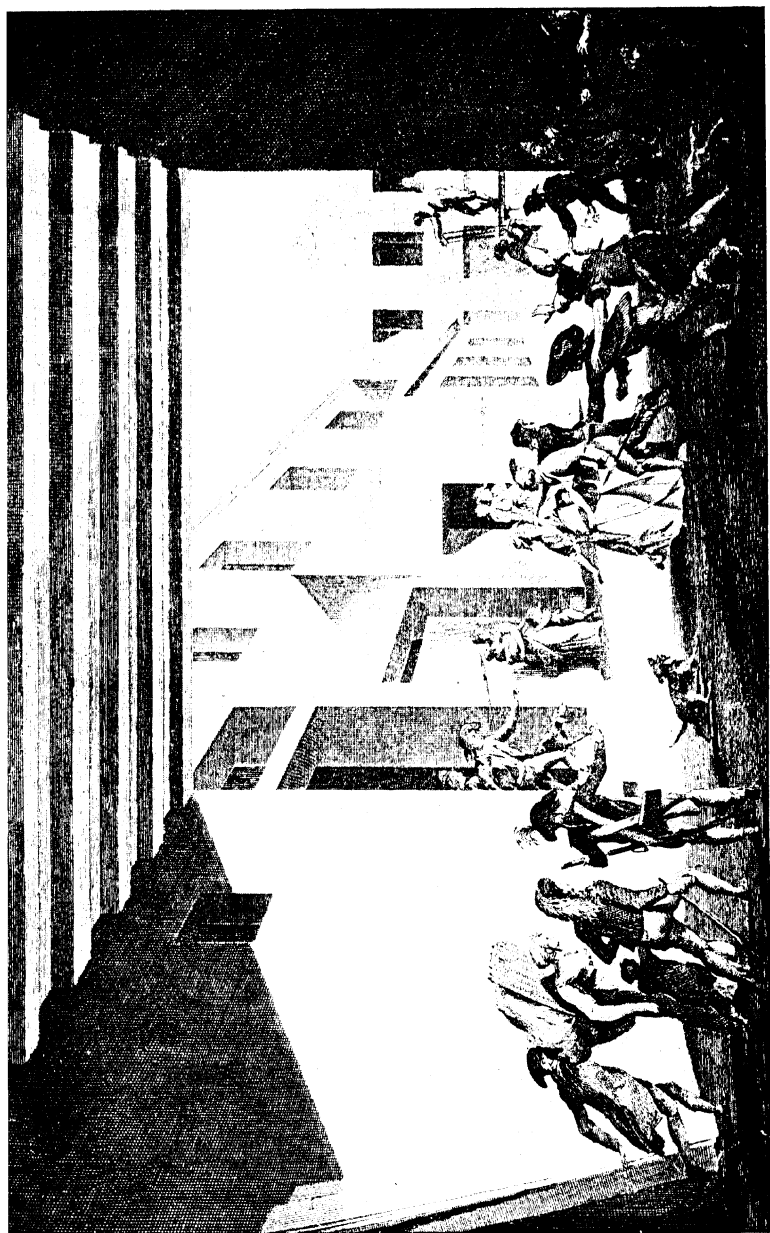
The Tyrant

she should want it in prison. The conduct of this heroic young woman furnished the tyrants with an opportunity for murder too favourable to be neglected. They instantly proclaimed that a vast plan of conspiracy against the lives of those renowned patriots, Collet d'Herbois and Robespierre, had been formed by traitors within the prison, and traitors without.

The father, mother and aunt of Cécile Renaud were led with herself to the Conciergerie, where she was again interrogated, and threatened that her whole family should perish with her if she did not confess her intention of assassinating Robespierre. She repeated what she had said at the Committee, and added that they might put her to death if they thought proper, but if she deserved to die, it was not for any intention to assassinate, but for her anti-republican sentiments. Cécile Renaud, who was very young and handsome, was dressed with some care, and perhaps coquetry. Her appearance led her savage judges to invent a new species of question in order to bring her to confession. By their directions she was stripped of her own clothes and covered with squalid and disgusting rags, in which condition she was made to appear in the council chamber and undergo a new interrogatory, where the same menaces were repeated, and where she answered as she had done before, and with great spirit rallied her judges upon the absurdity of trying to shake her purpose by a mode of punishment so contemptible.

Notwithstanding no proof of any intention to assassinate Robespierre could be brought against her, she, together with her whole family, was put to death. Her two brothers, who were fighting the battles of the republic on the frontiers, were ordered to be conducted to Paris that they might share her fate, but the tyrants were too impatient for blood to wait their arrival, and owing to this circumstance they escaped.

With Cécile Renaud perished not only her own family, but sixty-nine persons were brought from different parts and different prisons of Paris who had never seen or heard of each other till they met at the Conciergerie, and were together dragged before the tribunal and declared guilty of one common conspiracy. Their trial only lasted a sufficient length of time to call over their names ; none of them were permitted to make any defence ; the jury declared themselves satisfied in their souls and consciences, and the devoted victims, covered with the red cloaks worn by assassins on their way to execution, were led to death. Among those who perished on this occasion were Madame de Saint-Amaranthe, her daughter who had married M. de Sastine, the son of the ex-minister, and was now only in her nineteenth year and one of the most beautiful women in France, and her brother who was but seventeen years of age. A friend of mine was confined in the same prison as this family. A servant from the outside of the walls had made



The Tyrant

Mme de Saint-Amaranthe understood by signs that her son-in-law, who had been confined in another prison, had perished and that she herself was in danger. She went immediately to her daughter and said to her : “ Your husband is no more, and it is very probable that we shall follow him to-morrow to the scaffold. No tears ! This is no time for softness—we must prepare to meet with courage a fate that is inevitable.”

The next day passed, and no summons to the Conciergerie arrived, but on the night following at eleven o'clock, a huissier entered Mme de Saint-Amaranthe's chamber, and told her she was wanted below. The call was well understood. “ And are not we too wanted ? ” cried her son and daughter. “ Certainly,” answered the huissier. They both flew to their mother, threw their arms round her neck and exclaimed, “ We shall die together.”

The next day they perished (June 17th, 1794).

Fouquier-Tinville, the public accuser, placed himself at a window of the Conciergerie close to the gate through which the prisoners passed in order to ascend the carts which were to carry them to execution. There he feasted his atrocious soul with the sight of sixty-nine victims, covered with assassins' cloaks, and observing among them some young women, particularly the lovely Mme Sastine, walking towards the vehicles of death with that firmness which belongs to ignorance, “ How bold those women look ! ” cried Fouquier,

enraged at their calmness. “ I must go and see if they show the same effrontery on the scaffold, even if I should lose my dinner.”

* * * * *

Robespierre had now nearly attained the summit of his hopes, but his ignorance being equal to his vanity, he did not perceive that the few steps he had to climb before he could grasp at absolute dominion, must be trodden with cautious prudence ; since he had advanced so far that, if he was now compelled to descend, it could only be by a descent which would lead to death. He had destroyed his most powerful rival, Danton, but his spies and emissaries, and above all his guilty conscience, told him that more of his colleagues must fall to give him perfect safety. He read in the countenances of the deputies, in the silent gloom with which his edicts were sanctioned, that new storms gathered over his head, and he prepared in conjunction with Couthon the means of putting the lives of all those who opposed him more absolutely in his power. In the meantime he thought fit to amuse the people by a festival in honour of the Supreme Being, whose existence he had lately proclaimed, and his name he had dared to utter with his unhallowed lips.

The plan of the festival was arranged by the celebrated painter David, he whose mind the cultivation of the finer arts has had no power to soften ; who, not satisfied with displaying on canvas those scenes

The Tyrant

of sanguinary guilt which from the horrors they excite furnish fit subjects for the pencil, has contributed to give them in his bleeding country “ a local habitation and a name ” ; who, instead of cherishing that sacred flame of enlightened liberty which is connected with the sublimer powers of the imagination, was the lackey of the tyrant Robespierre and the friend of the man of blood, Marat. Ambitious of recorded disgrace, of immortal ignominy, he debased the noblest gift of heaven, genius, and employed his degraded pencil in tracing the hideous features of the monster Marat, while a groaning people were compelled to bow the knee before the image he had set up. At the tribune of the National Convention, David insulted all common sense and decency by a comparison which, from its audacious absurdity, excites as much ridicule as indignation.

“ Cato, Aristides, Socrates, Timoteon, Fabricius and Phocion,” exclaims the panegyrist David, “ ye whose venerable lives I admire. I have not lived with you—but I have known Marat ! ” (Blessed compensation !) “ I have admired him like you, and posterity will do him justice ! ”

Yes, David, repose with your idol upon the civic crowns, the palms and laurels won by revolutionary measures, and doubt not that posterity will do ample justice both to you and Marat. Posterity indeed will be spared the task of overthrowing his altars, since

they are already in the dust, and while the offences of many of our vulgar tyrants will be forgotten with their ignoble names, David's shame will be as durable as his celebrity.

While I am upon the subject of Marat and his friend, I cannot help observing that nothing appears more strange to us in this country than the opinions which are formed in England of the public characters of France, not by the enemies but by the friends of the French Revolution. That Brissot, Guadet, Vergniaud should receive no incense of applause from those who perhaps lament that the king's castle of the Bastille was overthrown, is natural ; but when we hear Mr. Sheridan speak in the House of Commons of the *faction of the Gironde*, and when we read in Mr. Gilbert Wakefield's answer to Mr. Paine's pamphlet his remark upon the *Brissotine faction*, we are filled with astonishment. They might with as much propriety talk of the factions of Sidney, of Russell, and of Hampden. Such observations are blasphemies indeed from the lovers of liberty ; they who ought to pronounce with veneration the names of those illustrious martyrs who, after the most honourable struggles for their country, shed their blood upon the scaffold in its cause, with heroism worthy of the proudest days of Greece or Rome. But though the iron sceptre of revolutionary government has restrained the groans, the lamentations of a nation mourning for the fall

The Tyrant

of its best defenders, and though the slavish pen of the “*Moniteur*,” from which Europe received French intelligence, applauded the assassins of liberty ; though Brissot, it was asserted, had filled his coffers with English gold, while his widow was languishing with an infant at her breast, with no other nourishment than bread and water, in one of the dungeons of Robespierre, and at this moment exists with three children “steeped in poverty to the very lips,” yet with becoming pride disdaining to solicit support till the memory of her husband has received, as it shortly will do, some mark of public atonement and public honour—history will judge between Brissot and Robespierre, between the Gironde and the Mountain. History will not confound those sanguinary and ambitious men who passed along the revolutionary horizon like baneful meteors, spreading destruction in their course, with those whose talents formed a radiant constellation in the zone of freedom and diffused benignant beams on the hemisphere till extinguished by storms and darkness.

But let us return to the festival instituted by the tyrant. David, ever ready to fulfil the mandates of his master Robespierre, steps forth, marshals the procession, and like the herald of Othello, “orders every man to put himself into triumph.”

At this spot, by David’s command, the mothers are to embrace their daughters ; at that, the fathers are

to clasp their sons ; here, the old are to bless the young ; there the young are to kneel to the old ; upon this boulevard the people are to sing ; upon that, they must dance ; at noon they must listen in silence, and at sunset they must rend the air with acclamations.

The citizens of Paris had been invited, and the invitation amounted to a command, to decorate their houses in honour of the festival. Accordingly, Paris on that morning (June 8th, 1794) lighted up by brilliant sunshine, presented the most gay and charming spectacle imaginable. Woods had been robbed of their shade, and gardens to the extent of some leagues rifled of their sweets, in order to adorn the city. The walls of every house were covered with luxuriant wreaths of oak and laurel, blended with flowers, civic crowns were interwoven with national ribbands, three-coloured flags waved over every portal, and the whole was arranged with that light and airy grace which belongs to Parisian fancy. The women wore garlands of fresh blown roses in their hair, and held branches of palm or laurel in their hands ; the men placed oaken boughs in their hats and children strewed the way with violets and myrtle. The representatives of the people had large three-coloured plumes in their hats, national scarves thrown across their shoulders, and nosebags of blended wheat-ears, fruit and flowers in their hands, as symbols of their mission.

But the glowing festoons appeared tinged with

LOUIS DAVID, DEPUTY TO THE CONVENTION.

From a Drawing in the Musée de Versailles.

The Tyrant

blood, and in the background of this festive scenery the guillotine arose before the disturbed imagination.

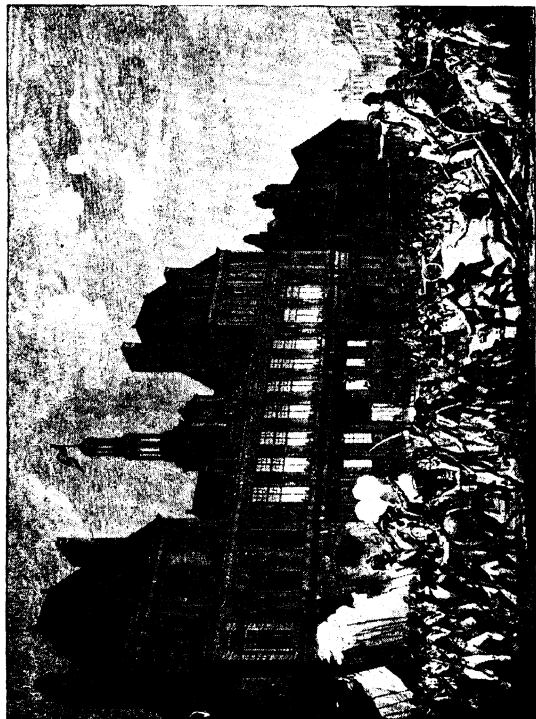
A great amphitheatre was raised in the gardens of the Tuileries immediately before the palace, now the seat of the Convention. Upon a tribune in the centre of the theatre, Robespierre, as president of the Convention, appeared, and having for a few hours disencumbered the square of the Revolution of the guillotine, this high priest of Moloch, within view of that very spot where his daily sacrifice of human victims was offered up, covered with their blood, invoked the Parent of universal nature, talked of the charms of virtue and breathed the hope of immortality. When the foul fiend had finished this impious mockery, he descended from the tribune and walked with great solemnity towards a grotesque kind of monument that was raised in front of the palace, on a bason which had been covered over for that purpose. On this monument was placed a misshapen and hideous figure, with ass's ears, which for some time served as an enigma to the gazing crowd, who knew not how to account for this singular appearance, till Robespierre having set fire to this image of deformity, which was declared to be the symbol of atheism, its cumbrous drapery suddenly vanished, and a fair and majestic form was discovered, emblematical of wisdom and philosophy.

Atheism being thus happily destroyed, the Con-

vention, attended by a numerous procession of people, and preceded by triumphal cars and banners, marched to the Champ de Mars where, with much toil and cost, a rocky mountain had been reared, upon whose lofty summit the tyrant and his attendants climbed, and from whence he once more harangued the people ; and the festival closed with hymns and choral songs in honour of the Supreme Being.

Robespierre, on this day, intoxicated with his power, lost sight of his usual prudence and displayed all the littleness of his vanity. He caused a line of separation to be made between himself and the other deputies of the Convention, and marched at some distance before them, like a captain at the head of his band. He had the folly to display his importance by keeping the Convention and the assembled multitude waiting, and the ceremony suspended for two hours, while he was sought for in vain. During the procession his creatures attempted to raise the cry of “Vive Robespierre !” but it was only faintly echoed by the spectators, many of whom followed him with “curses, not loud, but deep . . . which the poor heart would fain deny, and dare not.”

Two days after this festival in honour of the Supreme Being, Robespierre compelled the enslaved Convention to pass a law (decree of 22 Prairial, Year II—10th June, 1794) which permitted the revolutionary jury to condemn those who were brought before them,



ATTACK ON THE HÔTEL-DE-VILLE, 9 THERMIDOR, YEAR II
(JULY 27TH, 1794).

Drawn by Moud.

(Hartmann Collection.)

The Tyrant

from their own internal conviction, without any proof whatever or hearing any witnesses ; and which also suppressed the superfluous office of official defender, or counsel, a privilege that Couthon, who made the report in the name of the Committee of Public Safety, asserted conspirators by no means deserved. In other words, the jury were now authorized to pass sentence without even the forms of a trial. From this moment till the fall of Robespierre, all the judicial solemnities of the revolutionary tribunal consisted in reading over the names of the accused, who were immediately after declared by the jury to be guilty of a conspiracy against the safety of the French people and the indivisibility of the French republic.

If any of the unhappy persons thus proscribed attempted to speak in their defence, they were thus silenced by the President : “ It is not your turn to speak,” and if they persisted in declaring their innocence, they were put what is called *hors des débats*, that is, ordered immediately out of the court, condemned in their absence, and sent to execution.

“ I was not in prison when this conspiracy took place,” cried the Viscountess de Noailles, Madame de La Fayette’s sister.

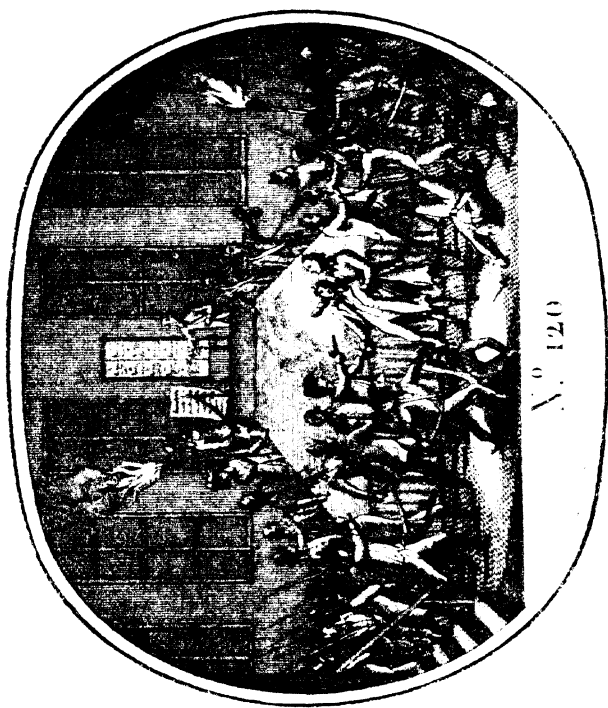
“ But you *would* have been in the conspiracy if you had been there,” answered the president ; and this unfortunate lady, the mother of three children, perished with her own mother and grandmother.

Memoirs of the Reign of Robespierre

Madame de La Fayette, being in another prison was, in the hurry of forming the lists of death, forgotten when her family suffered, and still lives.

From this period, the prisons became the scenes of unexampled horror and despair. Till now the crowds by which they were inhabited had submitted to their fate with that cheerful resignation, and often with that careless gaiety which is buoyant at a Frenchman's heart in circumstances that would altogether overwhelm the sinking spirits of the people of other countries. The houses allotted for the prisons of the suspected persons were for the most part hotels of emigrants which were placed in the most agreeable situations of Paris, with extensive gardens and commanding beautiful views of the country. Such habitations had nothing of that gloom and darkness which we usually associate with the idea of a prison, and they were peopled with the best society in Paris.

The ladies were attentive to the duties of the toilette, the gentlemen were polite and assiduous, and the courtyard of the Luxembourg, the Convent of St. Lazare, and some other prisons, exhibited of an evening almost as much brilliance and gaiety as the Tuileries or the Champ-Élysées. Music and literature had their amateurs. At the Luxembourg, select circles were formed to hear lectures from men of letters, sometimes in chemistry, sometimes on astronomy. At St. Lazare, ladies sent invitations to dinner



N^o 120

9. THERMIDOR (JULY 27TH, 1794).
The Gendarme Meda Shooting at Robespierre.

The Tyrant

from the corridor of Frimaire to the corridor of Floréal, with the same formalities as formerly from their respective hotels. Sometimes cards, sometimes *bouts-rimés*, charades and epigrams beguiled the evening of its length, and thus the days of captivity rolled on.

They were indeed embittered by one hour of mournful melancholy, and one of trembling terror ; the first when the evening paper arrived, and the list of the victims of the revolutionary tribunal was read over, among whom the prisoners seldom failed to find some friend or acquaintance to lament. But this was a sensation of gentle sadness compared to that turbulent dismay excited by the hoarse voice of the turnkey sounding at midnight through the long galleries the knell of some devoted victim who was called upon to rise, in order to be led to the Conciergerie by gendarmes sent for that purpose from the revolutionary tribunal. Still, however, amidst the tears which the prisoners shed over their lost companions, many of them cherished the fond hope that they themselves should escape. But the law of the 22nd of Prairial (June 10th, 1794) tore away every illusion of the imagination of the heart and displayed the general proscription of the prisoners in all its extent of horror. It was no longer a solitary individual who was called to death, multitudes were summoned at once. Every returning night, long covered carts drawn by four horses entered successively the court-

yards of the different prisons. Whenever the tramping of the horses' feet was heard, the prisoners prepared themselves for their doom. The names of the victims marked for execution the following day were called over, and they were instantly hurried into these gloomy hearses. The husband was scarcely allowed time to bid his wife a last farewell, or the mother to recommend her orphan children to the compassion of such of the prisoners as might survive the general calamity. At the prison of the Luxembourg, an hundred and sixty-nine victims were in one night torn from their beds and led to the grated dungeons of the Conciergerie.

I have seen the Conciergerie, that abode of horror, that antechamber of doom. I have seen those infectious cells where the prisoners breathed contagion, where the walls are in some places stained with the blood of the massacres of September, and where a part of the spacious courtyard, round which the grated dungeons are built, remains unpaved since that period when the stones were taken up for the purpose of burying the dead. I have seen the chamber where the persons condemned by the revolutionary tribunal submitted to the preparatory offices of the executioner, where his scissors cut off the lavish tresses of the youthful beauty, and where he tied her tender hands behind her waist with cords.

The usual pretext for those murders *en masse* which

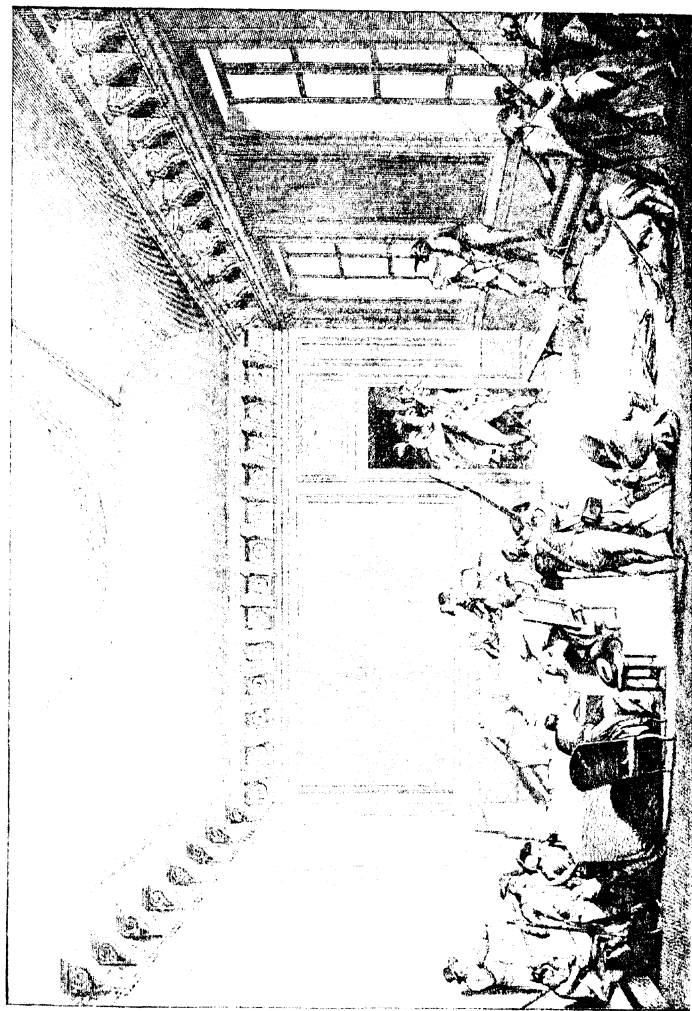
The Tyrant

were practised at this period, was that of a conspiracy in the prisons—a vague and wide term which the tyrants might interpret at their pleasure, and which gave them the power of including whatever persons and whatever numbers they thought proper. Spies were placed in every prison, who, after making their lists of proscription as directed by the tyrants, declared that a conspiracy existed of which those marked on the lists were the authors or accomplices. Persons who had never seen or heard of each other till that moment were often brought together from different prisons to take their trial for the same conspiracy, and when the decemvirs wished to get rid of any particular individual, he was without any hesitation added to what was called the *fournée*, the batch.

While the tyrants, far from finding any satiety of blood in their daily murders, were erecting new ranges of seats in the hall of the revolutionary tribunal, sufficient to contain one hundred instead of fifty accused persons, death now hovered in a new form over the prisons. The administrators of the police went to each prison attended by a strong guard, and ordered the prisoners to be shut up in their respective chambers and not suffered to have any communication till the purpose of the visit was effected. They then went successively to every apartment, and demanded of the prisoners their knives, scissors, razors, buckles, watches and all money they had in their possession.

These unhappy persons, being altogether ignorant of the object of the visit, had no time to conceal anything, and were stripped of all they had except fifty livres in paper, which each prisoner was suffered to retain in order to pay for his subsistence. But from this day famine scowled along these gloomy mansions, adding to the pangs of mental sufferings those of debility and disease. The prisoners were no longer permitted to receive their daily meals from their own houses or from a tavern, but were ordered from henceforth, in conformity to the laws of equality, to eat *d' la gamelle* (out of one dish at a common table). Their food was provided for them at the rate of fifty sous a day, by a cook placed in the prison. Their nourishment consisted of one meal in twenty-four hours, often too scanty to satisfy the calls of hunger, and sometimes composed of such nauseous diet as the greater part of the prisoners were unable to eat.

Age and infirmity were denied every indulgence necessary to support the disordered frame or raise the sinking spirits. A little bread saved from this meal, and water, was all that could be obtained during the rest of the day. To this meal the prisoners of the Luxembourg, where nine hundred persons were confined, were summoned in a succession of three hundred at a time, by a great bell which called them to the hall, at the door of which stood the jailer, who had been an executioner under Collet d'Herbois



9 THERMIDOR (JULY 27TH, 1794). ROBESPIERRE WOUNDLED IN THE HÔTEL-DE-VILLE.
Drawn by Duplessis-Bertaud. (Historical Pictures of the Revolution, No. 197.)

The Tyrant

at Lyons. This man was remarkably tall, big and muscular ; his arms were bare to the elbow ; he wore a fierce red cap which had now become the symbol of blood, and looked as if he were prepared for a massacre. He only suffered twenty persons at a time to enter the hall, and then, flinging the door in the faces of the others, obliged them to remain in the passages till those within were seated at the tables. The hour of dinner passed like the other hours of the day, in gloomy and unbroken silence, for even the soothing intercourse of conversation was now forbidden under the penalty of being immediately dragged before the tribunal, since the spies placed in the prisons, whenever they observed two or three persons talking together, enquired sternly if they were forming a conspiracy.

What most occupied the minds of the prisoners at this period, was contriving the means of escaping from their tyrants by a voluntary death, which was now become difficult, since they had been stripped of every instrument which could have served that purpose. Such was the situation of these unhappy victims of tyranny when on the night of the 9th of Thermidor (July 27th, 1794), the tocsin sounded and the city was called to arms. Many circumstances led the prisoners to believe that these sounds were the signal of a general massacre, but the tocsin now rung the joyful, the triumphant peal of liberty.

VIII

THERMIDOR

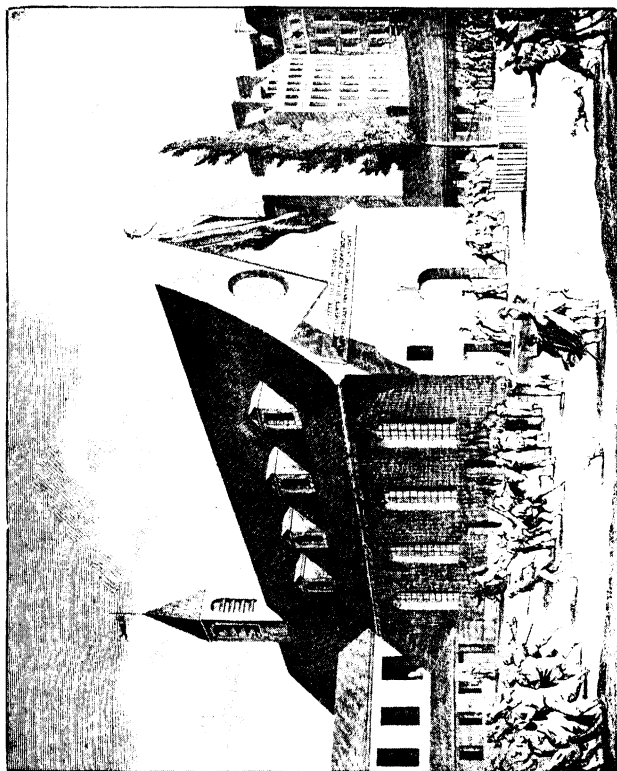
MY pen, wearied of tracing successive pictures of human crimes and human calamity, pursues its task with reluctance, while my heart springs forward to that fairer epoch which now beams upon the friends of liberty (July–September, 1795)—that epoch when the French republic has cast aside her dismal shroud, stained with the blood of the patriot and bathed with the tears of the mourner, and presents the blessed images of justice and humanity, when the laws of mercy are but the echo of the public opinion, of that loud cry for the triumph of innocence, of that horror of tyranny which hangs upon every lip and thrills at every heart. Not to have suffered persecution during the tyranny of Robespierre is now to be disgraced ; and it is expected of all those who escaped that they should assign some good reason for their suspicious exemption from imprisonment ; an *écrou* (extract from the jailer's register) is considered as a certificate of *civism*, and is a necessary introduction to good society. But happy, thrice happy, is he who has been immured in a dungeon and has been unfortunate beyond the common lot. To him the social

Thermidor

circle listens with attention, for him the tender beauty wakes her softest smile—for him await all public and private honours ; he may lay claim to the possession of the highest offices of the State, and may aspire in proportion as he has suffered. After the taking of the Bastille every Parisian who came into the country declared himself one of the conquerors, and most of them had even seized de Launey, the governor, by the shoulder—so, to-day, if we were to lend our belief to all those who tell us they were on the fatal list destined for the guillotine on the 11th Thermidor, the day after Robespierre's execution, we must suppose that his appointed hecatomb for that day consisted, instead of his ordinary sacrifice, of half Paris at least. But after all the cruelties that have passed, how soothing is the moment when pity becomes the fashion and when tyranny is so execrated that to have been its victim is glory !

The tears of compassion now flow even for those objects whom once to commiserate was death. A republican may now, unsuspected of royalism, lament the fate of the innocent and interesting sufferer at the Temple, she whose birthday was a day of triumph, whose cradle was strewn with flowers (Marie-Thérèse-Charlotte, called Madame Royale, daughter of Louis XVI), and who now, immured within a living tomb, remains the sole survivor of her unfortunate family. The prospect of her speedy release from

captivity gives perhaps as general pleasure at Paris as at Vienna. This sympathy is not confined to those persons who wish to replace her family upon the throne, for cruelty is no longer the order of the day, and the most determined lover of democracy may now, without offending against its laws, profess his pity for a blooming beauty confined in gloomy towers, although she happens to be a princess. That fair mourner, while she waits the hour of liberty and happiness, is no longer enclosed in dismal solitude within the walls of her apartment. For some weeks past she has spent as much of the day as she chooses in the gardens of the Temple, and her confinement has been cheered by the society of an amiable and accomplished lady, Mme de Chautereine, to whom she is much attached and who cheats the hours of their length by teaching her Italian and drawing. She often enquires after her unhappy family, of whose fate, except that of her father, she is altogether ignorant ; but every enquiry she makes concerning them, Mme de Chautereine is obliged to answer in conformity to the orders she has received from the Committee of General Safety, by telling her, “ this is a secret of State.” And surely it is merciful to conceal from her events which have passed, till she is placed in a situation where her tears will be wiped away with the tenderness of assiduous attention, and the sympathy of congenial sorrow.



THE CLOSING OF THE JACOBIN HALL, RUE SAINT-HONORE, IN THE NIGHT
OF JULY 27TH 28TH.

Drawn by Delpechise-Perrier. *Historical Pictures of the Revolution, No. 106.*

Thermidor

Paris once more reassumes a gay aspect. The poor again have bread, and the rich again display the appendages of wealth. The processions of death which once darkened the streets are now succeeded by carriages elegant in simplicity, though not decorated with the blazonry of arms or the lace of liveries. The cheerfulness habitual to Parisian physiognomy again lights up its reviving look, and the quick step, the joyous smile, the smart repartee, the airy gesture have succeeded the dismal reserve and the trembling circumspection which so ill suited the national character. With the careless simplicity of children who after the rigours of school hasten to their sports, the Parisians, shaking off the hideous remembrance of the past, fly to the scenes of pleasure.

The Tuileries and the Champs-Élysées are again crowded with the sprightly circles seated on each side of their broad alleys and beneath the shade of their majestic trees. At the period of great scarcity of bread, when crowds assembled every morning at the doors of the bakers' shops, the people called it going *à la queue*. These queues in search of bread have long since ceased, and are succeeded by queues in search of pleasure. There is a queue every evening at every theatre, and the late persecution of the Roman Catholic church having produced the usual effect of persecution, there is a queue at the churches every Sunday to hear mass. For some time during the

spring there was a violent schism at Paris between those who tried to make a holiday of Sunday and those who observed the decadi as a festival. The town was nearly equally divided between what were called the Dominicans and the Decadists.

One-half of the tradesmen shut up their shops, and one-half of the mechanics refused to work on one day, the other half on the other. At length the matter has been compromised in the manner most agreeable to a people so fond of amusements as the Parisian, by making merry both on Sunday and decadi. Each day has become a holiday, on which churches, theatres and public gardens are alike crowded, and all the world appears satisfied.

The women indulge in their dress the full extent of female caprice as well as extravagance. This day the *perruque blonde* converts the dark-complexioned nymph with a fair beauty, to-morrow she reassumes her jetty locks, and thus varies her attractions.

“ How many pictures of one nymph we view,
All how unlike each other, all how true ! ”

Some lances were shivered lately between the lovers of the “ Marseillaise ” hymn and the amateurs of the “ Reveil du peuple,” but hostilities have now ceased in the same manner as between Sunday and decadi, by making it a rule to sing both.

In the meantime literature and the arts, covered

Thermidor

with sackcloth and ashes during the reign of our Jacobin vandals, again revive ; the National Library offers every other day its treasures of literature to the public, and its long galleries and ample tables are filled with persons of both sexes who, amidst the silence which is there observed, enjoy the charms of meditation or the pleasure of study.

The noble gallery of the national museum, filled with the masterpieces of art, is crowded three times a decade with citizens of all classes, the poor as well as the rich, who cannot fail to humanize their souls, as well as improve their taste, by such contemplations. The celebrated sculptured horses of Marly now decorate the entrance of the Champs-Élysées, the porticoes of the Louvre are filled with statues, the public walks are preserved with attentive care, and Paris, so lately besmeared with blood, Paris, the refuge of barbarism and the den of blood, once more excites the idea of taste, elegance, refinement and happiness.

But whither am I wandering ? Before we reach those fair and cheerful regions, we must pass through “ the nethermost abyss of chaos.”

The tyranny of these monsters was not the only evil with which the people of France had to struggle. Famine was pressing on with hasty strides ; the law of the maximum had not only driven away the foreign merchant, but also kept at a distance the dealer who

Memoirs of the Reign of Robespierre

was accustomed to provide for the daily returning wants of the inhabitants. The grazier no longer drove his oxen to Paris, where the maximum, on entering the barriers, diminished half their value ; nor could the butcher furnish meat, when the maximum law allowed him but half the purchase money of the cattle. “ Patriotic Lents ” and other revolutionary measures of the like sort were recommended to the fasting multitudes, but one wag, more indignant than the rest, painted well the state of want and cruelty to which Paris was then abandoned, by writing on the pedestal of the statue which was placed on the spot of the public executions : “ The only butchery in Paris is at this place.”

While Carrier ravaged the country of the west, and Collet d’Herbois laid the opulent city of the east (Lyons) in ashes, Lebon hung like a destroying vulture over the north, feasting his savage soul with the sight of mangled carcasses, and Maignet consumed the lovely villages of the south in the flames of a general conflagration.

The scene of Maignet’s proconsulate was the departments of Vaucluse and of Bouches-du-Rhône. He obtained the sanction of the Committee of Public Safety, which was given without the consent of the Convention, to his plan of forming a popular commission at Orange.

The Committee of Public Safety named the judges



PORTRAIT OF ROBESPIERRE.

Drawn by Gérard, at a Meeting of the Convention.

(24 Floréal, Year II—May 13th, 1794) who by their conduct justified the discernment with which they were chosen, and proceeded with revolutionary rapidity in their work of death. “You know,” says the secretary of the commission, in a letter to Payan, “the situation of Orange; the guillotine is placed in the front of the *mountain*, and it seems as if the heads in falling paid it the homage it deserves.” Sometimes, however, the majority of the judges of Orange complain in their letters of two of their colleagues whose consciences had not altogether attained the height of the revolution. Fauvety, the president of the commission, says in a letter to Payan: “Ragot, Fereux and myself are *au pas*; Roman-Fourosa is a good creature, but an adherer to forms, and a little off the revolutionary point which he ought to touch. Meilleret, my fourth colleague, is good for nothing, absolutely good for nothing in the place he occupies; he is sometimes disposed to save counter-revolutionary priests; he must have proofs, as at the ordinary tribunals of the ancient system.”

Lebon seems to have determined to distinguish himself, and merit the applause of his employers, by exercising new modes of oppression and trying new experiments of cruelty. One of his preliminary strokes of tyranny was that of dragging in succession the multitudes he had arrested, from their respective prisons, and obliging them to appear before the

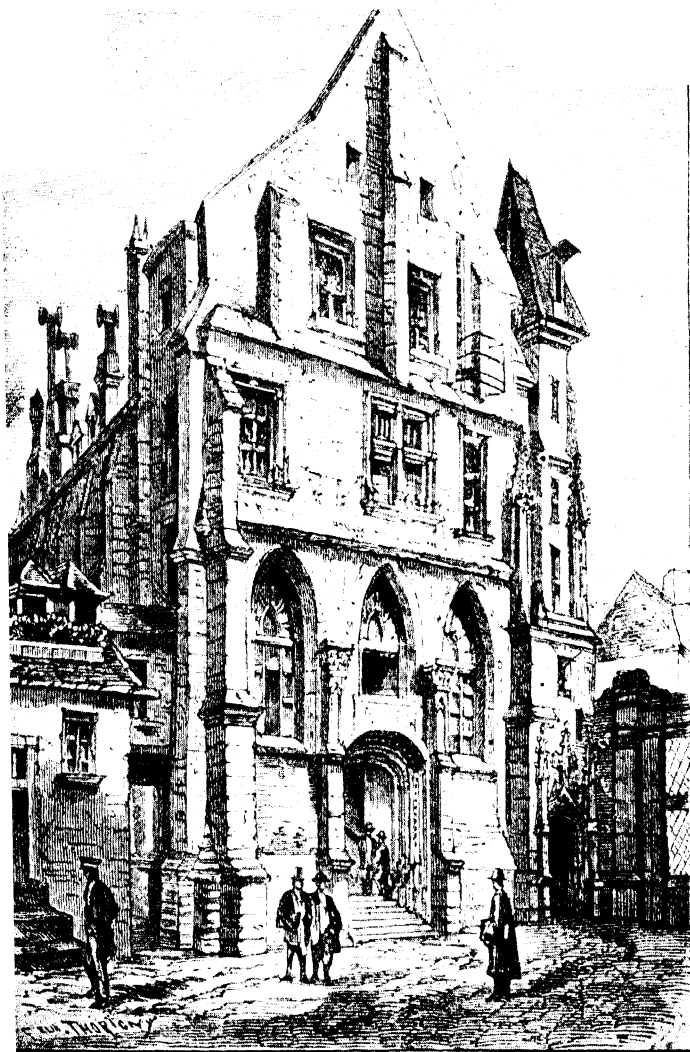
Memoirs of the Reign of Robespierre

popular society. There, placed on an elevated seat, the men were exposed to all the indignities his agents could inflict and the women to the coarsest ribaldry and the most barbarous insults. These examinations were the usual prelude to an accusation before the revolutionary tribunal which he established at Arras, and a section of which he sent, for the sake of expedition in his work of death, to Cambrai.

The judges and jury of those tribunals were composed of his own relations and his creatures, and, together with the executioner, they lived in his house and dined at his table.

In the meantime he caused the following inscription to be written over the door of his apartment : "*Ceux qui entreront ici pour solliciter l'élargissement des prisonniers, n'en sortiront que pour être mis en arrestation.*" (Those who enter here to solicit the release of prisoners shall only go out to be themselves placed under arrest.)

The large and populous city of Arras soon wore the aspect of an unpeopled desert. No cheerful sounds were heard in the streets ; all was solitary and silent. The town appeared widowed of its inhabitants, the few who remained at liberty having found themselves, when they ventured to go out, exposed to meet the rudeness and swilled insolence of Lebon and his inebriated jury, who paraded the streets armed with sabres and pistols, insulting, and



MUSEE DUPUYTREN (Old Cordeliers Club).

(Hartmann Collection.)

Thermidor

often arresting, persons with whose countenance or figure they happened to be displeased. At the hour of execution, Lebon used to appear at a balcony of the theatre, near which the scaffold was placed, and sip his coffee while the heads of his victims were falling. Sometimes he ordered the military bands to play revolutionary airs during the executions ; sometimes he apostrophized the persons who were about to die, and the last sounds which met their ear were the outrages against humanity which issued from his polluted lips.

The former Marquis de Vieux-Fort was tied to the fatal plank, with the knife suspended over his head, when Lebon appeared upon the balcony of the theatre, commanded the executioner to stop, and obliged the unfortunate sufferer to remain in that situation while he read to the people a newspaper he had just received, and which contained the account of a recent victory (Battle of Menin). He then, addressing himself to Monsieur de Vieux-Fort, told him to carry to the other world his despair at these tidings of success, and at length ordered him to die. A peasant of Achicourt, a village near Arras, came to sell her butter in the town. As she walked along a street, she met a cart filled with victims who were going to execution. "*Voilà,*" said this poor creature with naïveté, "*voilà des gens qui meurent pour bien peu de chose !*" (Those people there die for very little.)

She was instantly seized and led to the tribunal of Lebon. During the trial she held in her arms her infant of three months old, whom she suckled. When she heard her sentence of death, she cried, "What ! for that one word I said, will you part the child and its mother ? "

After the execution of the faction of Danton and that of the Commune had taken place, both of which had been condemned on the most absurd and ill-founded accusations, the decemvirs found no longer any opposition to their tyranny, but saw the lives and fortunes of the people of France laid abjectly at their feet. But instead of employing their power to any useful purpose, or even that of giving stability to their own government by favouring the weak after having overthrown the mighty, they became more profuse in the waste of blood, and atrocious without motive or end. Whether the tyrants suspected the fidelity of their tribunal, or whether they thought that the business of death was not readily enough despatched, six commissioners were also put into activity. The prisoners in general rejoiced at their institution, for they had the credulity to think that the evidence of civism which some could exhibit, and the exemption from any positive counter-revolutionary charge which others could prove, would obtain their release by

Thermidor

these commissions, without undergoing the formality of a hearing before the tribunal ; and as these commissions were not invested with the power of life and death, every one was anxious to gain an audience.

The administrators of police and the revolutionary committees were ordered to procure printed lists which in successive columns displayed the parentage, birth and education, principles, conduct and connections of every prisoner under their respective care, together with the motives of their arrest and the opinions entertained of them by their accusers. Each prisoner was to undergo a sort of political interrogatory before the commission, and as most of them had been long confined, and so many contradictory principles and standards of patriotism had succeeded each other since their captivity began, the prisoner must have had more than common sagacity to have answered his catechist agreeably to the fashion of the day. For had he declared his belief in the divinity of reason, and asserted that priests were impostors, he would have been immediately condemned as a *Chaumettiste* ; or had he professed his patriotic faith in a black wig, dirty shirt and pantaloons, he would have been sentenced as a conspirator of the *Hébert faction*. Indeed, to the great majority of prisoners, which consisted of people of former rank, this Babylonish language was unknown in almost all its dialects, and their interrogatory was altogether useless, their fate

being previously decided. A friend of mine saw one day in the hands of a revolutionary commissioner one of those blank lists which he was going to fill up. "We have," says he, "in our pigeon house (meaning the *maison d'arrêt* of his section) about one hundred and twelve old birds and young; of these, about twenty or thirty we shall send to the *little window*, and the rest shall set out on their *travels*." Such were the cant terms for death and banishment.

The operations of the popular commissions were altogether unknown till after the 10th of Thermidor, when their papers and lists of sentences were found among the manuscripts of the tyrants. Some persons, on whom only sentences of deportation had been passed by the commission, were afterwards condemned by the Committee of Public Safety to death; such was the Maleissye family, the father, mother and two daughters whose story I have related. Their crime was stated in the paper of the commission, and they were sentenced to be banished for being "excessively fanatical, and connected with priests; which connection *might* propagate the spirit of counter-revolution." Some were condemned for being enemies of the revolution, others for being of the cast of nobility; some for what they had done, others for what they had not done; "*N'ayant jamais rien fait pour la revolution.*" (Having never done anything for the revolution.) One gentleman whom I knew was



TALMA IN THE RÔLE OF SULLA.

(From Hollier's *Miniature of the Bibliothèque Nationale*.)



THE AMBÉ GRÉGOIRE.

(*Bibliothèque Nationale*.)

Thermidor

doomed to banishment for having asked with some impatience, a second time, for his certificate at the section. The two young St. Chamauds, beautiful girls of fifteen and nineteen years of age, ex-nobles, were condemned to deportation for their opposition to the establishment of civil and religious liberty—"strong fanatics, and enemies to liberty, although so young." And also the family of Sourdeville, consisting of a mother and two daughters, whose only crime, as stated by the judges, was that Mme de Sourdeville was the mother of an emigrant, an ex-noble and aristocrat, having her husband and another son struck by the sword of the law; and the two young ladies were likewise condemned with her, for standing in the relation of sister and daughter to the unfortunate father and brother who had perished.

The execution of the Danton faction and the dismissal of the revolutionary army were followed by other measures equally revolutionary, in which we were ourselves included, for it was at this period (April 16th, 1794) that the law took place which banished nobles and foreigners from Paris, and which ordered all suspected of conspiracy to be sent from all parts of the republic to be tried at Paris. As it was said of Greece that you could not move a step without treading on a history, so it might now have been said of Paris that you could not pass along a street without viewing some object of horror. Our

banishment, therefore, had it not been attended with the consciousness of what was passing in the scene we had left, would have been bliss compared to our residence in town.

Nothing perhaps contributed to mislead the people of Europe so much with respect to the state of the French nation at this period, as the intelligence which was conveyed to them by the public papers. It required a more intimate knowledge of French affairs than foreigners in general could find the means of obtaining, to reconcile the intelligence given in those newspapers with the atrocities which they heard were committed. When pillage and murder, under the name of confiscation and punishment, blackened every part of the republic, the papers presented us with the most elegant and philosophical reports on agriculture, literature and the fine arts. But for the long catalogue of victims which closed the evening paper, we might, even in our retreat at Marly, have fancied that the reign of philosophy had begun, and that, where there was apparently so earnest a desire to civilize and succour mankind, there could not be so monstrous an assemblage of treason, atrocity and carnage.

Most of these interesting and instructive reports which tended to soften the hideousness of the general outline, were made by men who had not the means or the courage to stem the torrent, who sighed in

Thermidor

secret over its ravages, and employed their moments in doing something which might tend to rescue their country from the barbarism into which it was hastening. I particularly allude to the reports of Grégoire on the improvement of the language, on public libraries, and on the establishment of national gardens throughout the republic.

Sometimes the decemvirs themselves relaxed from their habitual ferocity, and a report escaped from their lips in which there was neither conspiracy nor murder. Barère, in a momentary caprice of virtue, pronounced a discourse on the means of rooting out mendicity from the republic, replete with humanity and ideas of general benevolence.

While Robespierre behind the scenes was issuing daily mandates for murder, we see him on the stage the herald of mercy and of peace.

“Consult,” says this finished actor, “only the good of the country and the interests of mankind. (Speech to the Convention on May 7th, 1794.) Every institution, every doctrine which consoles and elevates the mind, should be cherished; reject all those which tend to degrade and corrupt it. Reanimate, exalt every generous sentiment, every sublime moral idea which your enemies have sought to obliterate. Draw together by the charm of friendship and the ties of virtue those men whom they have attempted to separate. Who gave thee a mission to proclaim to

the people that the Divinity exists not ? O thou who art enamoured of this sterile doctrine but who never wast enamoured of thy country, what advantage dost thou find in persuading mankind that a blind fatality presides over their destiny, striking guilt and virtue as chance directs ; that the human soul is but a fleeting breath extinguished at the gates of the tomb ?

“ Will man be inspired with more pure and elevated sentiments by the idea of annihilation than by that of immortality ? Will it produce more respect for his fellow creatures, or for himself ? more attachment to his country ? stronger resistance to tyranny ? greater contempt of death ? You who regret a virtuous friend, you love to think that the nobler part of his being has escaped from death ! You who weep over the grave of a child or wife, does *he* bring you consolation who tells you that all which remains of them is but dust ? Unhappy victim, who expired under the stroke of the assassin, thy last sigh is an appeal to eternal justice ! The tyrant turns pale upon his triumphal car at the sight of innocence upon the scaffold. Would virtue have this ascendancy if the tomb placed on the same level the oppressor and the oppressed ?

“ Wretched sophist ! by what right dost thou wrest the sceptre of reason from the hands of innocence to intrust it to those of guilt, to throw a funereal veil over nature, to aggravate misfortune, to soothe vice,

Thermidor

to depress virtue and degrade the human race? In proportion to the degree of genius and sensibility with which man is endued, he clings to those ideas which aggrandize his being, and elevate his heart; and the doctrine of such men becomes that of the universe. Ah! surely those ideas must have their foundation in truth! At least I cannot conceive how nature could have suggested fictions to mankind more useful than realities, and if the existence of God, if the immortality of the soul, were but dreams, they would still be the most sublime conceptions of the human mind!"

The moment, however, was now approaching, when humanity was to be avenged of its tyrants. "There are times," Voltaire observes, "of horrors and of madness among mankind, as there are times of pestilence, and this contagion has made the tour of the world." France has just seen one of these epochs, which are the astonishment, the terror and the shame of human nature. Happily they are rare in any history, and in the course of the ordinary calamities which are the scourge of civil society, those epochs may be considered as mortal maladies, amidst that crowd of habitual infirmities which are inseparable from our organization.

"When we dare reflect," says the illustrious advocate of humanity, Servau, "on all that has just passed; and repeat with a sigh, *I also am a man*, we

know not at what we ought most to blush—the crimes which human nature can commit, or those which it can suffer ; at the horrible wickedness of the few or the stupid patience of the whole.”

“ We have seen what a wicked man would have blushed at foreseeing, and what a good man would have feared to imagine ; we have seen what those who have committed would not have believed in the history of others ; we have seen in one moment, and as it were by a thunderbolt, the whole of France become only one frightful chaos, or rather one vast conflagration ; every principle, consecrated by necessity in every place, at all periods and in every heart, spurned at or annihilated ; the overthrow of every custom, nay of prejudices and even habits ; the almost total exchange of property, which is more astonishing than its ruin ; we have seen beggary taking the place of wealth and wealth not daring to put itself into the place of beggary ; in the midst of which a band of villains, but a handful compared to the whole nation, scattered throughout the republic, subdue a people victorious without and armed within. And this band of monsters were still greater in impudence than in crimes, parading from city to city, from street to street, from place to place, from house to house, with robbery, pillage, famine and assassination in their train ; striking with the same poniard the prudence which was silent, or the truth that had the

Thermidor

boldness to speak, pursuing the fearful man in his flight, after having murdered the intrepid citizen who scorned to fly. We have seen indeed the moment, when every man in France who was not a decided villain could not, without risking death every hour of the day, either be silent or speak out, either stay or fly ; and this was suffered by Frenchmen at the very period when they were the conquerors of the world.”

It was impossible that this state of extreme violence could be permanent. The first dawning hope of deliverance arose from the quarrels of the different factions ; it was therefore with satisfaction, the cause of which the friends of liberty were cautious to dissemble, that they saw the party of the commune, the war minister and of Danton, sent to the scaffold ; for there seemed no reason why other factions should not arise to displace, and also to bring to punishment, those who now wielded the revolutionary sceptre. Though Danton was destroyed, his party was still numerous in the Convention ; and it was asserted that had he appeared at the tribune when he was accused, and denounced Robespierre, he would have sent his rival to the scaffold. Robespierre, who was conscious that he had not subdued the spirit, though he had taken off the head of the faction, thought, like Cæsar, that nothing was done while anything remained unfinished. He saw the difficulty that would attend his operations if, to use Camille Desmoulins’ expres-

sion, he continued to make *des coups réglés* in the forest of the Convention, and therefore conceived, it seems, the hardy project of felling the whole wood at one stroke ; of breaking up the Convention as a gangrened body not worth partial applications, and taking the care of the State into his own hands.

The Committees of Public and General Safety, which were the committees of government, were absolute in their administration, and the Convention had dwindled into the most contemptible insignificance. The deputies met to hear a report for the sake of form, to clap their hands on the re-election of their tyrants when the periods arrived, or huzza at a carmagnole of Barère. At four o'clock they were sent away to dinner, to call again next morning at twelve.

Although Robespierre had succeeded in breaking them into this subordination, he had not so entirely checked the ambition of his fellow-riders ; for there were some who, though better dissemblers than the members of the late commune, beheld with as unsatisfied an eye the stretches which Robespierre's faction was making, and which they saw would push them from their seats, as they had aided him in removing others.

The first step towards the acquisition of absolute power was the concentration of all authority in the Committee of Public Safety. Robespierre had filled the vacant places in the commune with his own



Thermidor

creatures, and the Jacobins were his devoted subjects. All that remained, therefore, was to annihilate the powers of the Committee of General Safety, which took care of the lives and properties of the citizens, while the other was charged with the external affairs and the general weal of the State ; and unite in this last both individual and public welfare. To this proposition the members of the Committee of General Safety did not discover any readiness to assent, and though Robespierre had reigned with uncontrolled sway since the death of the Gironde, his ascendancy over his associates had not reached so far as to prevail with them to bend their necks, like the herd of the Convention and the people, to his yoke.

These struggles had made a formal division at this period in the two committees, which had consisted for some time of two parties, but whose coalition had been cemented hitherto by crimes and by blood. Robespierre's party in the Committee of Public Safety was composed of Saint-Just, Couthon and Barère, in that of General Safety of David, Vadier and some others ; and though these committees were at hostilities with each other, the interest of the ruffians was too closely united to bring their quarrel before the public. The ambition of Robespierre embarrassed them very much, and it was more than once proposed that recourse should be had to the poniard. This plan, which was highly relished by many members

of the committee, was vehemently opposed by a citizen who, having been admitted into their councils, was often an instrument in the hands of providence of lessening individual horrors and of saving many from destruction. He represented to them all the evils that would necessarily result from such an act of premature violence ; that they might indeed kill the tyrant, but that they would infallibly be the victims themselves ; that Robespierre would be considered by the people as a martyr, and they would be his reputed murderers. Forbearance and temporizing would push him on to some act of inconsideration and folly which they, who knew his treasonable designs, might lay hold on as an attempt to destroy the liberty of the republic, and the people would send Robespierre with execrations to the scaffold, whom, in the present state of things, they would perhaps be ignorantly induced to honour as a saint.

Robespierre, finding the commission so little inclined to pay him that submissive homage which was yielded to him by the rest of France, absented himself both from them and the Convention during some weeks, and began to prepare for open hostilities, with the assistance of the Jacobins, the revolutionary tribunal and the regenerated commune. The united strength of these bodies was formidable, and the Convention had nothing to oppose to them but the possibility of exciting rebellion against the constituted authorities,

Thermidor

for the military force was in the hands of Henriot who was the devoted slave of Robespierre, and the civil and revolutionary concerns of the sections of Paris centred in the commune, the directors of which were of his immediate appointment. The Jacobins bore sway over the whole, and Robespierre was the absolute monarch of the Jacobins.

When he thought that his plan was sufficiently matured, he appeared at the tribune of the Convention, which he had not entered for some time, and made a vehement harangue on the oppression which was exercised over himself, and against the operations of the committees, promising the Convention that he would propose the only means fitted to save the country. (8th Thermidor, July 26th, 1794.)

His speech excited much indignation ; the members appeared to listen to him with sensations similar to those of the inhabitants of some great city, who hear the murmurs of the earthquake and feel the ground shake beneath them, but are ignorant where the gulf will open, and what part, or if the whole, will be swallowed up. The Convention, although alarmed and doubtful how to act, yet seeing the prospect of irremediable ruin before their eyes through the thin covering which the tyrant had thrown over his designs, assumed sufficient courage to debate on the prominent parts of his speech, which they ordered to be printed.

Robespierre having opened himself thus far to the

Convention, Couthon explained the speech more fully at the Jacobins in the evening. There he denounced the two committees of government as traitors, and insisted that the persons who composed those committees should be excluded from the society. The president of the revolutionary tribunal was the next commentator on Robespierre's speech, and pronounced without any reserve that the Convention should be purified also, which implied the entire dissolution of the representative body.

This purification was not to be confined to the Convention, for the conspiracy against the republic had, to borrow the language of these regenerators, its authors and accomplices in every quarter of Paris. The fate of one description of these conspirators was so certain, that their graves were literally dug before their eyes, and graves of no ordinary extent. These were the multitude of prisoners who were waiting a more formal, but no less certain, death before the revolutionary tribunal. It had been proposed to build a scaffolding in the great hall of the Palais, resembling the hall of Westminster, where two or three hundred might be tried at once, instead of fifty or sixty as was the present mode. But it was now thought the great ends of national justice might be better answered by what was called emptying the prisons at once ; and that, as the sentence on these conspirators was already passed, the formality of their appearance at a tribunal



JOSEPH LEBON.

Thermidor

might be dispensed with. For some days therefore labourers had been employed in several prisons of Paris in making large excavations in their respective courtyards, and it was not concealed from many of the prisoners by their keepers, and even by administrators of the police, how they were to be filled up.

We cannot hesitate in believing this new instance of atrocity, when we compare the revolutionary language used by the chiefs on the necessity of quick expedients to get rid of traitors, together with the changes made just at this period in the keepers of the various prisons, since those who had most distinguished themselves for firmness of nerve in the commission of murders had succeeded the ordinary ruffians, and also, what is more certain evidence, the information of many of the prisoners who, confined in different prisons, agree in relating the same fact. There is also little doubt that the nobles and strangers, who by the law of the 15th of Germinal (read 27th Germinal) were dispersed through the various communes of the republic, under the eye of tyrants, who were informed of their residence by the decadary returns of the several municipalities which they inhabited, would have shared the fate of the prisoners.

The Convention in the meantime observed their usual submissive silence, although they well knew that certain portions of them were designated, lists of proscription having been discovered from the careless-

ness of those who were to co-operate in the bloody work. One was found by accident in the papers of Vilate, one of the revolutionary jury who, being refractory on some particular point, had been arrested.

The same state of stupefaction which had led the Convention to see former masses torn from their body, seemed still to benumb their faculties. Robespierre, whose secession from the committees had not rendered him less the master of their operations, flattered himself that the task was now perfectly easy, for, independent of his irresistible phalanxes, the Jacobins, the revolutionary committees, the regenerated commune and the military force of Paris, the terror which he had infused into the Convention came powerfully to his aid.

The hours of the tyrant were nevertheless numbered, and the moment approached when he was to make his account with eternal justice. The attack of Robespierre upon his colleagues on the morning of the 8th of Thermidor, and the commentary made by his accomplices at the Jacobins the same evening, roused the Convention from their dishonourable lethargy, and they became bold from desperation.

The eventful day at length arrived, and both parties took their places in the hall of the Convention with an air of affected calmness, while some ordinary business of the day went on ; for no one even of the proscribed members seemed anxious to become the

Curtius of the rest, although the next meeting of the Jacobins, or the next motion of the municipality, might have decided the arrest of the whole Convention, except Robespierre's faction. But St. Just having ascended the tribune, and begun a speech in the same whining tone which Robespierre had used the preceding day, complaining of the bad treatment he had received, and of the treason of his colleagues in the committee, Tallien and Billaud-Varennes, the former of whom was on the list of proscription, and the latter Robespierre's rival in the committee—these two overpowered his voice by their denunciations against the perfidious and horrible designs of the tyrants, which they unveiled to the Convention. Robespierre, who was ignorant of this counter-conspiracy, though he saw a disposition the preceding day to mutiny, was struck as with a thunderbolt. He made at length some attempts to speak, but his voice was drowned in the denunciations poured forth against him. Tallien insisted on his arrest, but the Convention, under the impression of its habitual terror, contented itself with pronouncing that of his inferior agents, and it was not till Robespierre had mounted the tribune and, with the air of a chief, called the Convention a band of robbers, that Vadier, one of his former accomplices, obtained the vote of accusation by turning evidence against him. Robespierre, feeling himself beset on every side, threw a look of piercing

indignation toward his brother mountaineers, and reproached them for their cowardice. Hearing curses poured down upon him from every quarter, and seeing that his kingdom was departed from him, he called out in the fury of desperation to be led to death, which the Convention virtually decreed, in an unanimous vote of accusation against him. His colleagues St. Just, Couthon, Lebas and his own brother were arrested at the same time, and after some resistance were led away to prison.

Thus far the Convention had been successful, for all parties had concurred in the humiliation of a tyrant by whom all had been equally oppressed. But the scene which the city presented was truly alarming. The Jacobins, hearing of the insurrection against Robespierre, immediately assembled. The commune, which was ordered to the bar of the Convention, instead of obeying, rang the tocsin to call the citizens to arms. Henriot, the commander of the military force, who had been arrested and led to the Committee of General Safety, was released ; and paraded the streets on horseback, while the cannoneers under his orders were loading their pieces. Robespierre with his colleagues were delivered from prison by the administrators of the police and, being installed at the Hôtel de Ville, had outlawed the whole Convention.

Had the conspirators acted with ordinary sagacity, had they immediately marched their cannon against



LAZARE HOCHÉ.

Eq. Dapiessis-Berlauc.

Thermidor

the Convention, which for some hours was only guarded by a small number of armed citizens, the triumph of Robespierre and the municipality would have been complete. But, happily for humanity, they wasted those moments in deliberations and harangues, whilst the Convention, taking courage at the goodness of its cause, and in the hope of some sparks of remaining virtue in the people, discovered a disposition to defend themselves, and in a short time thousands flew to their aid. The hall of the Jacobins was cleared by the energy of Legendre, and seven deputies were named as generals for the conventional cause against the commune, who were now declared to be in a state of rebellion and put out of the law.

Such at this moment was the state of Paris when the commander of the military force, Henriot, appeared in the court of the Convention and ordered it to surrender. But he came too late. The Convention was now prepared for defence and answered his summons by putting him "out of the law" as well as his employers.

This "outside the law" has the same effect on a Frenchman as if it were the cry of the pestilence; the object becomes civilly excommunicated, and a sort of contamination is apprehended if you pass through the air which he has breathed. Such was the effect which this decree produced upon the cannoneers, who had planted their artillery against the Convention. With-

out receiving any further instructions, except hearing that the commune were *hors la loi*, they instantly turned their pieces. Henriot, seeing this unexpected resistance and finding that the sections meant to deliberate before they put the Convention to death, slunk back to the Commune, who were also in a profound state of deliberation. In the meantime the Convention had sent deputies into every quarter of the town, to rally the citizens around the assembly, and they succeeded so well that in a few hours the Convention had an hundred thousand men to march against the Commune.

The hôtel de ville was now besieged in its turn and might have made a formidable resistance had not the cannoneers of that quarter also heard of the *hors la loi* and refused to fire their pieces ; while the immense multitude who were idly assembled in the place de Grève before the hôtel, had taken possession of the carriages of the artillery to serve as ladders from which they could stare into the windows, and crowds were mounted on the cannon to enjoy the spectacle. The conspirators, now abandoned and, like Nero, having no friend or enemy at hand to despatch them, had no means of escaping from ignominy but by a voluntary death, which they had not the courage to give themselves. Cataline, it was said, was found at a considerable distance from his friends, mingled amongst his enemies, with a countenance bold and

Thermidor

daring in death. It is somewhat remarkable that nearly two years since, a writer, drawing the parallel or rather the dissimilitude of character between Cataline and Robespierre, observed that whenever the decisive moment of contest should arise between the parties which were formed after the 10th of August, Robespierre would perish ; not plunged into the ranks of his foes, but struck by some ignoble hand and die from a wound in his back.

The conspirators, seeing that all resistance was fruitless, hid themselves or took to flight. Robespierre was found in an apartment of the hôtel, and was sternly reminded by a gendarme that a supreme being really existed. Robespierre held a knife in his hand but had not courage to use it ; the gendarme fired at him with a pistol and broke his jaw-bone ; he fell without uttering a word. His brother threw himself out of a window and broke his thigh by the fall. Henriot had given his associates the strongest assurances that he was secure of the military force of Paris, and Coffinal, a judge of the revolutionary tribunal, when he saw that all was lost, poured forth the most bitter invectives against Henriot for having thus deceived them ; and at length seizing him, in a fit of rage and despair, threw him out of a window. Henriot concealed himself a short time in a common sewer, from whence he was dragged after having lost an eye.

These criminals with their accomplices were brought,

some on biers and others on foot, to the Convention, from whence they were all sent to the Conciergerie, except Robespierre, who was carried into the antechamber of the Committee of Public Safety, where those who attended him told me he lay stretched motionless on a table four hours, with his head bound up and his eyes shut, making no answer to the taunting questions that were put to him, but pinching his thighs with convulsive agony, and sometimes looking round when he imagined no one was near. He underwent the operation of dressing his wounds, in order to prolong his existence a few hours, after which he was sent with the rest of his associates to the tribunal. The identification of their persons was all that was necessary, since they were *hors la loi*, and the sentence of execution against them was demanded by their former friend, Fouquier-Tinville.

On the evening of the 10th of Thermidor (July 28th, 1794) these criminals were led to the scaffold. The frantic joy which the Parisians discovered on this occasion was equal to the pusillanimous stupor into which they had been hitherto plunged. The maledictions that accompanied the tyrants on their way to execution were not, as usual, the clamour of hireling furies. They proceeded with honest indignation from the lips of an oppressed people, and burst involuntarily from the heart of the fatherless and the widow. These monsters were made to drink the cup of bitterness to

Thermidor

the very dregs. Many of them were so disfigured by wounds and bruises that it was difficult to distinguish their persons, and little attention had been paid to alleviate these intermediate sufferings. In the mass perished Robespierre, his coadjutors Couthon and St. Just, Henriot, the Mayor of Paris (Lescot-Fleuriot), the national agent (Payan), the president of the Jacobins (Vivier), the president of the revolutionary tribunal (Dumas), the sansculotte preceptor of the young dauphin (Simon), and the agents of these leaders to the number of twenty-two. The following day the members of the Commune of Paris, to the amount of seventy-two, were beheaded on the place de Grève, and twelve on the day after completed the list of the chiefs of the present conspiracy.

The bar of the Convention which had hitherto been the echo of the tyrants applauding every barbarous measure and sanctioning every atrocious deed, now resounded with gratulation and triumph upon the victory, and assurances, since it was gained, that those who offered the address would have shed the last drop of blood to attain it, or, according to the accustomed phrase, “have made a rampart of their bodies.” This inconsistency on the part of the Parisians will not appear surprising when we reflect that the city was divided into two parties—the murderers, who were now overthrown, and those who were to have been murdered, and who now exulted in their deliverance.

Considering the immense influence which the terrorist faction, the denomination now given to Robespierre's supporters, had obtained both in Paris and in the departments, the whole of the administrations, both civil and military, throughout the Republic being put into their hands, it is scarcely credible that so mighty an host should have been overthrown by one single effort, in which no measures were prepared or combined.

The inhabitants of those living sepulchres, the prisons of Paris, felt with most ecstasy this happy revolution. Hope had entirely forsaken them. They had resigned themselves in fixed despair to that fate which they believed to be inevitable. The prisoners knew that some extraordinary scenes were passing in the city ; for in all the prisons they had been ordered to retire to rest one hour earlier than usual, and to leave their doors unlocked, and at the same time they observed an air of mystery on the faces of their keepers which seemed to bode some near and dreadful evil. The ringing of the tocsin during the night served to increase their apprehensions ; they imagined a great tumult agitated the city, but concluded that it was only some stroke of more extensive tyranny that was about to be inflicted, and that would consolidate more firmly the power of the tyrants. In this state of torture they passed the night and waited the light of morning in all the pangs of terror and dismay. At

Thermidor

length the morning returned and the important secret had not yet penetrated the walls of the prisons, but a feeling like hope animated the sinking spirits of the prisoners when, with the searching eye of anxious expectation, they sought to read their fate in the countenances of their jailers, and there discovered evident marks of disappointment and dejection, while some relaxation from their habitual severity succeeded the extraordinary precautions and rigour of the preceding day.

They were not, however, held long in suspense. In some of the prisons the newspaper of the last evening was procured at an enormous price, but who could rate too high the purchase which brought tidings of deliverance. In some of the prisons the citizens who were obliged to perform the painful office of guards within their gloomy courts, contrived to tell the prisoners in monosyllables breathed in whispers (for all intercourse between the guards and prisoners was sternly prohibited) that the hour of hope and mercy beamed upon their sufferings. In other prisons they were informed of what was passing by women who displayed upon the roofs of houses which overlooked at a distance the prison walls, the names of Robespierre and his associates, written in such broad characters that the prisoners with the aid of glasses could read them plainly; and after presenting the name, the generous informer showed by expressive gestures

that the head of him who bore that name had fallen.

A military gentleman who was confined in the prison of the Abbaye told me that after having passed the night of the 27th of July in the immediate expectation of being massacred, all his fears were instantly relieved by a very slight circumstance. The prisoners had long been denied the consolation of any interview with their friends ; the utmost privilege allowed them was that of writing upon the direction of the packets of linen, when they were sent to their houses to be washed, or received from thence, after a very strict examination, " I am well."

The wife of this gentleman, to whom she was tenderly attached, used every day to write with an aching heart upon the packet, " I am well." On the morning of July 28th, the packet arrived as usual, but one monosyllable and one note of exclamation were added to the direction : " Ah ! how well I am ! "

With a transport of emotion which told him his misfortunes were at an end, he read those few words, and hailed the blessed augur.

During many hours the fall of the tyrant was repeated with cautious timidity through the dreary mansions of confinement, and the prisoners related to each other the eventful tale, as if they feared that

" More than echoes talked along the walls."

Even the minds of those who were at liberty were



GENERAL HOOPER'S CAMP.

By Douglas's Boston.



THE WOMEN OF FRANCE, IMITATING THE WOMEN OF ROME, COME TO SACRIFICE THEIR JEWELRY.
Fame precedes the Chariot of the Law.

One of those hot-air facts descending the Champs-Élysées after the Festival of the Federation.
(Hutchinson Collection.)

too strongly fettered by terror to bear the sudden expansion of joy ; and the gentleman who first brought the tidings to my family that Robespierre was arrested, after having been blamed for his imprudence in mentioning such a circumstance before some strangers who were present, said in a tone of resentment : “ This is the fourth family which I have endeavoured to make happy by this news, and instead of being thanked for the intelligence, all are afraid to hear it.”

At length, however, the clouds of doubt, mistrust and apprehension vanished, the clear sunshine of joy beamed upon every heart and every eye was bathed in tears of exultation.

Yet those overwhelming emotions were empoisoned by bitter regrets. Every individual had to lament some victim to whom he was bound by the ties of nature, of gratitude, or of affection ; and many were doomed to mourn over a friend, or father, or a husband, whom a month, a week, a day, would have snatched from death. With peculiar pangs those victims were regretted who were led to execution, to the number of nearly sixty, on the 27th of July, without guards, the military having been called to the aid of the Convention on the arrest of Robespierre. It was recollected when too late ; it was re-echoed through Paris with a general feeling of remorse, that one word might have rescued those last martyrs of tyranny from death, and that yet they were suffered to perish.

If any private individual had from the gallery or at the bar of the Convention demanded a respite, there is no doubt it would have immediately been granted. The heart dilates at the idea of that sublime happiness which he would have prepared for himself, who should thus have rescued the innocent. What evil could malignity or misfortune have inflicted upon a mind which could have repelled them with the consciousness of such an action ! But tyranny, like guilt, “ makes cowards of us all ” ; every man trembled for himself ; the event of the day yet hung in suspense and the sufferers were left to die.

Soon after the execution of Robespierre, the Committee of General Safety appointed a deputation of its members to visit the prisons, and speak words of comfort to the prisoners, to hear from their own lips the motives of their captivity and to change the bloody rolls of proscription into registers of promised freedom. In the meantime orders for liberty arrived in glad succession, and the prisons of Paris, so lately the abodes of hopeless misery, now exhibited scenes which an angel of mercy might have contemplated with pleasure.

Crowds of people were constantly assembled at the gates of the prisons to enjoy the luxury of seeing the prisoners snatched from their living tombs and restored to freedom. That very people who had beheld in stupid silence the daily work of death, now melted in

Thermidor

tears over the sufferers and filled the air with acclamations at their release.

Among a multitude of affecting scenes which passed at those prison doors where the wife, after a separation like death, again embraced the husband, where children clung upon the necks of their long-lost parents, none were more interesting than the unbounded transports of a little boy of six years of age, the son of M. de F——, when his father met him at the gate and while he pressed him in his arms with an emotion which choked his voice. This child was particularly remarked, having engaged the affections of many persons in the neighbourhood by his behaviour during his father's long confinement. He had never failed to come every day, bounding along the terrace of the Luxembourg till he approached the walls of the prison, and when he reached the sentinel he always pulled off his hat very respectfully and, looking up into his face with a supplicating air, enquired, "Citizen, you will allow me to kiss my hand to my papa?" and unless when he spoke to those "who never had a son," his petition was generally granted. He then used to kiss his hands again and again to his father, and play over his sportive tricks before him, while the parent's tears followed each other in quick succession.

Paris was now converted into a scene of enthusiastic pleasure. The theatres, the public walks, the streets, resounded with the songs of rejoicing; the people

indulged themselves in all the frolic gaiety which belongs to their character, and all the world knows that joy is nowhere so joyous as at Paris, which seems the natural region of pleasure who, though scared away for a while by sullen tyrants, soon returns upon her light wing, like the wandering dove, and appears to find no other spot her proper place of rest.

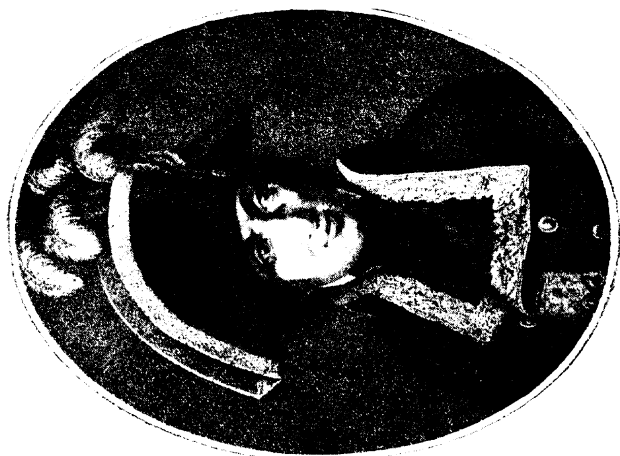
Upon the fall of Robespierre the terrible spell which bound the land of France was broken. The shrieking whirlwinds, the black precipices, the bottomless gulfs, suddenly vanished, and reviving nature covered the wastes with flowers and the rocks with verdure.

All the fountains of public prosperity and public happiness were indeed poisoned by that malignant genius, and therefore the streams have since occasionally run bitter ; but the waters are regaining their purity, are returning to their natural channels, and are no longer disturbed and sullied in their course.



ROBERT OF LISLE IN 1829.

(*Gallushego Nationale.*)



PICHET.

IX

“ *LA VENGEANCE NATIONALE* ”

THE great conspirator against the liberty of France was overthrown, but, like a horrid spectre from the tomb, the shadow of tyranny continued to hover over the Convention.

Robespierre's most intimate agents were arrested. Among them was the painter David, who, on 8th Thermidor, had suggested to the tyrant at a Jacobin meeting, that they should drink the poisoned cup together ; and Lebon, who had spread desolation in the department of the Nord. Gradually the inhabitants of Paris awakened from the stupor into which they had been plunged by the horrible scenes recently witnessed ; and, seeing that the despot's power had only resulted from their own cowardice, they supported the remainder of the “ right wing ” in the Convention.

The local revolutionary committees were reorganized, after having submitted to the humiliation of changing the names of Cato, Pompey, Leonidas, etc., for others less painfully reminiscent.

The anger of the Convention against those who had been its oppressors had not yet taken a definite form. It was difficult to make any choice among all those who

had crimes, great or small, to expiate. At last, the deputy Lecointre produced a series of grave accusations against the principal members of the former government (Billaud-Varennes, Collot d'Herbois, Barère, David, etc.) ; but the Convention was so little affected by the enumeration of crimes which would have filled any other assembly with horror that, instead of examining the truth of Lecointre's accusation, he was declared a calumniator. At this time, the Convention gave a remarkable example of the depths of degradation to which it had sunk, or of the still surviving influence exercised by the system of terror which had so long ruled its actions. This was concerning the canonization of Marat. The Committee of Public Safety, having presented a solemn report proclaiming the virtue of this first apostle of blood, proposed that the remains of this illustrious martyr of liberty should be transferred to the Panthéon. This was done on September 21st, 1794.

The canonization of Marat was followed by that of Rousseau, on October 11th, 1794. But neither the decrees of committees nor the shouts of the terrorists could stop the impetuous Parisian youth from overthrowing Marat's monument into the dust and cleansing the walls from the stain of his name. The young people of Paris, irritated by the slowness and leniency of the Convention's deliberations, attacked the premises of the Jacobins, and the Convention, on the pretext

La Vengeance Nationale

of putting an end to disorder, decreed the abolition of the society on November 11th, 1794.

The first act of public justice on the part of the revolutionary tribunal was the condemnation of Carrier. The annals of crime have perhaps never contained charges based on more atrocious acts than those of which Carrier was accused.

Although terror had ceased to be the order of the day, the restitution of rights to the survivors was accomplished only very slowly and with extreme caution. The members of the Convention who had protested against the abominable conspiracy of May 31st were still in chains, but public indignation became too strong to permit this, and the representatives who had signed the protest were released on December 8th, 1794, and again took their seats in the Convention. It would have been supposed that, once those who had protested against robespierre's tyranny to their unfortunate colleagues were free, the latter would themselves become the object of a similar act of justice. But this was by no means the case, for they were still suspected of being royalists. However, the sentence of death against them was annulled ; and the nobles and foreigners who had been exiled from Paris by the law of Germinal were allowed to return.

Gradually, seeing that the citizens of Paris were eager to support any measures taken to restore justice and order, the Convention declared Billaud-Varennes,

Collot d'Herbois and Barère guilty of the crimes of which they had been accused in Lecointre's indictment. Their defence was based chiefly on the state of the country during their administration. "The Republic," they said, "was exposed to the dangers of conspiracy from within and invasion from without," and proceeded to argue that the Convention and the people had given general consent to the acts of justice which they had been called upon to perform. The members of the Convention, who realized that they were implicated, not only declared the accused innocent of any counter-revolutionary intention, but proclaimed them as patriots "without whose intervention the Republic would have been lost."

This revived the spirits of the Jacobins, and the Parisians again became alarmed at the possibility of their return to power. On April 1st, 1795, the Convention was invaded by a crowd of petitioners, many quite drunk, demanding the restoration of Robespierre's Constitution of 1793. When the hall had been cleared and the tocsin had summoned the citizens to the help of the Convention, Pichegru was placed in charge of the National Guard. Collot, Barère and Billaud were sentenced to deportation to Guiana, and many Jacobin deputies were placed under arrest and imprisoned in Picardy. A strict watch was kept over all who had taken public part in the administration of Robespierre's régime, and peace and order was restored to Paris.



ROBESPIERRE'S ROOM IN DUPLAY'S HOUSE.

La Vengeance Nationale ”

The revolutionary tribunal, an undying example of the manner in which tyrants pervert justice, became the instrument of “ national vengeance.” Its president had perished with Robespierre on the 10th of Thermidor, and the public prosecutor, Fouquier-Tinville, had been in prison for eight months. This wretch, who had made a festival of death, who had bathed in the tears of the innocent and rejoiced in the despair of the victims whom, by one whisper of his foul lips, he had sent daily to the scaffold, was at present condemned to suffer the same tortures that he had inflicted on others, and to beg in vain for the mercy he had never shown.

On May 1st, 1795, I was at the revolutionary tribunal when the charges against Fouquier-Tinville and his accomplices were re-read after all the witnesses had been heard. On entering the hall, I was seized with a feeling of profound horror. So many persons who had been dear to me had met their doom there, and now the benches where they had sat were occupied by their murderers.

There was scarcely any need for the jury to deliberate. It only remained to apply the law and pronounce the judgment. And, as though all the circumstances of the trial had been arranged to show the punishment of heaven, the very words used were those with which the condemned had been wont to judge the innocent : the accusation being one of conspiracy against the

safety of the French Republic, and the penalty being death.

The criminals heard the sentence pronounced in the midst of the acclamations of a joyous multitude. They replied by threatening and insulting the tribunal. On the road to the scaffold, they were overwhelmed with indignant cries from the crowds in the streets. Fouquier-Tinville was the last to be executed. He mounted the scaffold hastily, urging the executioner to hurry, and the curses of the people were the last sounds which he heard on earth.

X

THE REVOLUTION OF PRAIRIAL

ALTHOUGH the Jacobin attempts of April 1st-2nd had been defeated, the punishment meted out to the rebels had been so light that it failed to serve as a warning against future insurrections. Cambon and Thuriot, for whom a warrant of arrest had been issued, but who were in hiding in the faubourg Saint-Antoine, worked indefatigably to stir up a new rebellion which was to have a happier ending. Other conditions also favoured an attempt. Bread had become extremely scarce and the poor, subject to great privations and excited by their own distress, were easily persuaded that the Assembly was responsible for the public want.

Early in the morning of the first of Prairial (20th May, 1795) the tocsin sounded in the faubourg Saint-Antoine, the inhabitants took up arms, and a manifesto was distributed with the title "The people's insurrection for bread and for the recovery of their rights." In this manifesto the Government was accused of allowing the people to die of hunger and of imprisoning patriots. Insurrection had therefore become a most sacred duty. It had therefore been agreed that

Memoirs of the Reign of Robespierre

citizens of all ages and of both sexes should march on the Convention, to make the following demands : for bread, for the abolition of the Government, the re-establishment of the constitution of 1793, the arrest of all those who had participated in the tyranny exercised since the 10th of Thermidor, the liberty of prisoners and the convocation of primary assemblies.

The Convention replied with a decree making the Commune of Paris responsible for any attack on the national representation and giving directions to the military and the citizens to hold themselves ready. Scarcely had this been published when the insurgents appeared, clamouring for bread and a constitution, and forced their way into the Convention, while the crowd outside grew larger from moment to moment. The gendarmes on this occasion seemed inclined to resume the rôle they had played as Robespierre's myrmidons, and some declared that they were " ready to fight the enemy on the frontiers, but they would not fire on the people."

The funereal tolling of the tocsin mingled with the rattle of pikes and bayonets, the cries of the crowds and the shots of musketry. The rebels withstood the guard, and the tribunes and seats of the Assembly were occupied by the armed crowd. The president gave an order to the lieutenant-general Liébaut, upon which thirty sabres were drawn against him. Féraud, who had pleaded with the rebels to retire, and had

The Revolution of Prairial

implored them to respect the sanctity of the law, perceived the lieutenant's danger and ran to his assistance. He flung out his arms between Liébaut and the assassins, and fell wounded at the foot of the tribune. A thousand wounds pierced his body, which was dragged into a corridor, and there his head was cut off and fixed to the point of a bayonet which was held as a trophy in front of the President.

Several shots were fired at the President, Boissy d'Anglas, but fortunately by an inexperienced hand. His attitude in these most difficult circumstances was admirable. Facing imminent death, he refused to sanction the decrees put forward by the insurgents. Calmly and immovably he exposed himself to the blows of the assassins, resolutely refusing his signature. By this honourable resistance he became the saviour of his country.

The populace occupied the seats of the hall and constituted themselves a deliberative assembly, whose resolutions should be definitely ratified by those deputies who had kept to their posts. The Jacobin deputies, who had remained in the hall while all the others had left it, lined up before the tribune, and voted upon the following measures: the immediate liberation of the patriots and deputies arrested on the 12th Germinal, domiciliary visits to requisition food, the reorganization of the Committee of Public Safety, and the arrest of those who at the moment composed

it, their places to be taken by some of those at present voting.

The Committee of General Safety dispatched a deputation to the new committee, but its delegates were maltreated and not allowed to speak. While the new powers were deliberating how to prevent the government from carrying out another 12th of Germinal and were considering their arrest as a means to prevent their own, another and stronger deputation arrived. A battle followed, and after a short resistance, the insurgents took to flight. But they rallied shortly after and in their turn obtained the victory. In the midst of their rejoicings, the building resounded with cries of "Long live the Convention!" "Down with the Jacobins!" The forces of the citizens had been strengthened, while many of the rebels, tired from the day's proceedings, had returned home. Remembering all the horrors of the Jacobin tyranny, the citizens threw themselves on the insurgents and soon the hall was cleared of the crowd and the government of such brief duration overthrown.

Here I will make one remark. During the frequent insurrections which took place in Paris in the course of the revolution, it has been observed that the people always dispersed at meal-times. The same characteristic was noticed in the previous century by the Cardinal de Retz who, on receiving the order to disperse the crowd on the first day of the Fronde rebellion,

The Revolution of Prairial

replied : “ That will not give me much trouble. It will soon be supper-time.”

There was a sort of interregnum between three in the morning and ten o'clock the following day (21st May, 1795), when the Convention resumed its sitting. Having annulled the decrees passed by the Jacobin deputies, the Convention ordered the arrest of twelve among their number who were the following day accused of treason before the tribunal. But the Jacobins, in spite of their defeat the previous day, had not given up hope, and opened fire on the Convention. The citizens who had come to the assistance of the Convention had relaxed their vigilance, imagining that order was now completely restored.

The Convention, fully aware of the superior strength of the rebels, and anxious to meet the danger by a pretence at conciliation, sent a deputation of twelve of its members to fraternize with the insurgents. As the deputation left the hall, the assembly passed the decree assuring an adequate supply of bread, and declaring that Robespierre's constitution should enter into force immediately. These decrees were communicated to the insurgents, who in their turn sent a deputation to the Convention. The leader, after remarking upon the cordial reception given to the Convention's deputation, declared that “ the people ” were prepared to return to their homes if their other demands were satisfied. These were : the liberation of

their friends, and the punishment of those who dealt in money rather than assignats—demands which the people, according to this orator, were ready to support with their lives.

The President (Vernier) hastened to assure the delegates that their demands would be immediately considered, and, to complete this scene of degradation and ignominy, the President embraced this band of rebels and one deputy congratulated the Convention on this “hallowed” session.

The cowardice or inopportune indulgence of the Convention had encouraged the conspirators, as was to be expected, and, for the fourth time, the faubourgs prepared for an attack. There was not a moment to lose. The Parisians, realizing the danger, took up positions of defence and the Tuileries were held by armed citizens. Thus supported, the Assembly of Representatives took courage, and on May 23rd decreed that if the faubourg St. Antoine would not surrender its arms and weapons, and the assassin of Féraud (who had been rescued by his friends at the foot of the scaffold), the inhabitants would be declared to be rebels and the sections of Paris would be mobilized against them.

The rebels, prepared for a hostile Convention, had barricaded the entrance to the faubourg, but the sight of several regiments of the line, and the Paris sections, made a great impression, which was reinforced by



ROBESPIERRE ON THE MORNING OF 10 THERMIDOR.

Bas-relief in Bronze, by Claudet, from the original in the Musée de Salins.

The Revolution of Prairial

threats of starvation and of setting fire to the faubourg by a general bombardment. In the evening they sent a deputation to the Convention declaring that they were prepared to come to terms ; but the Convention insisted upon unconditional surrender, and this was accomplished the same evening. The Jacobins were disarmed and the use of pikes forbidden.

Six of the arrested deputies were tried by a military commission and condemned. Three committed suicide and three died on the scaffold. Collot d' Herbois and Billaud-Varennès avoided re-trial by escaping from the country in a sailing vessel, and Barère, whom some invisible hand seemed to guard, obtained pardon.

This new defeat of the Jacobins involved the annulment of the 1793 constitution, and a committee was appointed to draw up a new constitution.

XI

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE YEAR III

THE Convention, having subdued the Jacobins, was urged by all lovers of liberty to set aside the revolutionary régime which had developed in such haphazard fashion. The Commission of Eleven, to whom had been entrusted the task of drawing up a new constitution, submitted a report early in August, and after some discussion the proposed constitution was accepted. The commission then proposed that the revolution should be ended.

This was an idea most acceptable to the public, worn out by six years of most violent revolutionary struggle, and longing, if not for order, at least for rest.

The decree of the Constituent Assembly, that no retiring member of the legislature should be re-elected, had caused many great evils, and the realization of this defect gave rise to two further decrees. One, called the law of the 5th of Fructidor (August 22nd, 1795) laid it down that two-thirds of the members of the Convention were to be re-elected to the new legislative body, and the second, called the law of the 13th of Fructidor (August 30), declared that, failing the re-election of the prescribed two-thirds, the number

The Constitution of the Year III

lacking should be elected by the deputies themselves. These two laws were added to the Act of the Constitution, and submitted to the ratification of the nation.

The history of the political events which followed the promulgation of these memorable laws forms one of the most remarkable epochs in the annals of the French Revolution : I reserve it for a later publication. For the moment I only wish to add that the primary Assemblies all over the Republic having unanimously accepted the Constitution, it was proclaimed " national law," and at two o'clock in the afternoon of the 5th of Brumaire (October 27th, 1795) the President of the Convention declared that that body had accomplished its mission.

So after an existence of three years, this memorable assembly ceased to be. It was a most eventful period in the history of humanity. The Assembly was replaced by the new legislature, composed of two chambers, the Council of the Five Hundred and the Council of Elders, two-thirds of whom were members of the old Convention, and one-third newly elected by the people.

Their first act was to set up an executive power called the Directory, and the new government machine began its activity. The void left by the French monarchy was now filled by a powerful and triumphant Republic.

I cannot end this sketch of the history of the revolutionary government without observing that we should not commit the injustice of making the French people responsible for crimes they deplore and of which they have only been the victims. It would be as unjust as to describe the English as a barbarous nation because a certain Clive had reduced some provinces of Asia to famine, or because on the coasts of Africa English slave-dealers traffic in human lives.

The cause of liberty is not less sacred, her charm no less divine, because some sanguinary monsters and savage villains have sullied her temples and insulted her worshippers. Their grotesque ears, like those of Midas, were insensible to the sweet harmony of her voice, and we should not be surprised if, to such judges, the uncouth Jacobin jargon should appear preferable to the divine whisper of Apollo's lute.

But these savage triumphs are of the past ; anarchy and vandalism shall not return. The new Constitution, like the spear of Romulus, will take such deep root that no human power will be able to dislodge it, and, like the forest whose foliage gladdens the heart, it will become an object of veneration to the people.

THE END

